

Common Ground

No. 2

August 1981

**Studies at the Fringe of Human
Experience.**

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The Phantom Hitch-Hiker accounts, to which Michael Goss has devoted a great deal of time and effort, raise some of the most complex problems of assessing 'truth' and 'myth' in the whole paranormal field; the stories so often seem impossible, yet are so often both subjectively credible, and possessed of some element of independent evidence. Here Michael, who also wrote and compiled the excellent 'Poltergeists - an annotated bibliography' (Scarecrow, 1979), raises some of the problems of making judgements during investigation and, perhaps, hints at why science is only a part of what makes for effective decision-making in assessing anomalous experience, wherever it occurs.

The MILNE Position by Michael Goss

A Retrospect of the Yorkshire Ripper Trial.

Mr. Justice Boreham: It sounds as if you are saying that you are very much dependent upon what you are told and rather as we in these courts, you have to test its accuracy.

Dr. Hugo Milne: That is correct, and very often you have to do this on the balance of probability.

The above dialogue took place on Tuesday 12 May 1981 in No.1 Court of the Old Bailey - which is another way of saying it formed part of the prolonged debate as to whether Peter William Sutcliffe, the self-confessed 'Yorkshire Ripper' was, or was not, a paranoid schizophrenic. The Defence, through witnesses like Dr. Milne, hoped to provide evidence that he was; the Prosecution by cross-examination of the same, wanted to prove that he was not, and that he should therefore be classed as a common, calculating murderer. In essence, part of the action was devoted to the question of what constitutes evidence of schizophrenia, and it was from this interlude that the above quotation has been taken. Mr. Justice Boreham and Dr. Milne were not, definitely not, discussing the nature of evidence in spontaneous psi events . . . but you may, if you choose, decide to examine their words in that context.

As most of us who read the papers know, Sutcliffe claimed to have heard voices. So did Joan of Arc, and look where it got her! Perhaps Mr. Sutcliffe never heard voices at all; perhaps he was, as the prosecution urged, merely feigning to have had such experiences in order to avoid the more serious charge hanging over his head. These voices, first heard (he said) in a cemetery, were important to the Defence, providing both evidence of schizophrenia, and setting the tone of the percipient's 'divine mission' which led him to kill at least 13 women, and injure at least 7 others.

Few parapsychologists will, like Dr. Milne, have spent around 13 hours in a witness box explaining and defending their view that a clearly subjective run of experiences belonging to a percipient have on their own level a veridical nature - that those 'unreal' things were real to that percipient and that therefore they ought to be accepted as such. But I am not sure that the worlds of parapsychology and legal proceedings diverge at this point, at least not where the Sutcliffe Voices are concerned.

Had he received precognitive flashes, or messages from the Space-People, would they have been any more credible than the vague, echoing jumble of which Sutcliffe spoke? I think not. Yet numerous people do claim to receive information of coming events, and are favoured by extra-terrestrial confidences - and some of us have to evaluate the veracity of them. Just like the psychiatrists retained in the Sutcliffe case, we are presented with incredible stories and have to decide on what level they are valid. If we cannot accept that these accounts have any value simply because they are not of an objective kind, I feel there is little point in the continued involvement of investigators in the field of spontaneous case studies.

The actual reality of the Sutcliffe Voices was never at issue during the Old Bailey proceedings - at least, not directly. It was assumed, a priori that they were not real, that anyone present in Bingley Cemetery would not have heard the things Sutcliffe heard (or claimed he heard). But this does not mean they were unimportant; indeed, the opposite applies. Dr. Milne tried to show that, as indications of what he styled a 'primary schizophrenic experience' their reality to the percipient (Sutcliffe) was of a type which confirmed him in the particular course of action which terminated in an Old Bailey appearance. The Prosecution, for its part, needed to throw doubt on their reality: no voices - no divine mission, leaving the accused vulnerable to public condemnation as a devious liar trying to obscure his far-from-exalted motivations. What both sides knew was that there could be no independent verification of the Bingley incident, nor of others like it; in short, it was all down to the word of Peter William Sutcliffe . . . who could be seen as either an ordinary liar or as a schizophrenic; which, as Dr. Milne stressed that lying is often symptomatic of the illness, threw up a Catch 22 situation.

When a psychical researcher interviews a witness who testifies to a scarcely-believable experience for which no independent corroboration exists (in the form of a second witness, etc.) he is in the Milne Position. For example, in early 1980 I met a man who claimed in all seriousness to have picked up a hitch-hiker who vanished from his car. Now, that can be classified as a Phantom Hitch-Hiker account: a venerable folk-motif or story told with a veneer of truth ('It happened to Me') which is actually a piece of fiction. Here was a person who adamantly insisted it was not fiction. It may have resembled the classic, non-veridical Phantom Hitch-Hiker tale in all but a few details (for example, the vanishing passenger omitted to give a name and address, which in most of these hoary old efforts is essential as a means of the driver subsequently confirming that the Hitch-Hiker was the spirit of a deceased person) - but RF unflinchingly denied that he was indulging in folk-fabrication - or lying, if you prefer. Worse - I found what he told me quite credible, in parapsychological terms. Yet I'd hate to be cross-examined on my findings by an Old Bailey Court. (Do you really ask us to accept, Mr. Goss, that').

What could I have done to make sure I had not wasted time, money, and effort on another old folk-ghost? I gave RF the usual psychical research interrogation, getting him to go over the thing several times, and mentally looking out for embellishments, exaggerations, and contradictions. I spoke privately with others who had heard his story within hours or days of the alleged event having taken place; incidentally, one was a fairly cautious local journalist, and another a Police superintendent. Guess what? The story he told them more or less matched the one he had told me. Lie detectors, hypnotic regression? Anyone who continues to believe in those techniques as foolproof providers of The Truth can't have been reading the recent literature on the subject. I am not sure that even Dr. Milne's favourite 'balance of probabilities', to which he referred several times during his court appearance, is of much use in dealing with a Phantom Hitch-Hiker. The whole thing is inherently beyond probability

It intrigued me to read how Dr. Milne, a person within a defined societal niche, was made to suffer because he could explain schizophrenia only in terms of its symptoms. In other words, if a person displays certain signs - is convinced that when people laugh, they are laughing at him, or when he comes to believe that all women are without exception prostitutes - its a fair bet that he is a schizophrenic. The second Old Bailey psychiatrist worried me by declaring that one such sign is a rapt, fixed stare at some spot on the ceiling, as if the watcher could hear a voice inaudible to everyone else. It's a thing I do all the time! Now, we know schizophrenia exists - that it is a recognised mental condition. Yet there are theoretical sceptics who oppose psi experiences, and spontaneous ones in especial, by denying that one can validate an abstract entity by reference to its symptoms. It seems that there are some mental experiences, then, where it is not permissible to argue that the observations of the witness are criteria upon which we can base our belief.

Schizophrenia may exist, but you can't touch it. Nor can you produce 'hard' evidence of another person's dream, his ghost-seeing experience, or his close encounter with an extra-terrestrial. The 'balance of probabilities' favours the first, apparently, but not the second, third, or fourth. This is why I would not like to be called as a witness to a spontaneous psi case before an Old Bailey court - should such a preposterous situation ever arise; the experience would be ruled inadmissible before the oath was taken. In the final analysis, we can believe in schizophrenia because we know it exists, but we can't believe in dreams, ghosts or CE's on the same kind of argument. At least, we're told we can't . . .

Desperately churning through the 'Oxford Book of Quotations' for a snappy end to this curiously-disjointed article, I came upon the following:

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow.

Whether or not Peter Sutcliffe actually heard those voices, I somehow feel that T.S. Eliot's lines have a peculiar relevance both to the Yorkshire Ripper's mental state and to psi experiences. Without plumbing the depths of what they mean, it could be said that between the 'reality' of the mental event (schizophrenic hallucination, a ghost-seeing experience) and the force which motivates it (schizophrenia itself, psychic activation) lies a great Shadow: the shadow of doubt on the part of the psychiatrist or parapsychologist over what if any portion of the witness's story can be believed. This is not the happy, snappy conclusion I hoped to come up with, but perhaps it's a fitting one: after all, a psychiatrist or parapsychologist confronted by the problem of what is real is never likely to find their studies terminating in a happy, snappy, conclusion.



As a small footnote to the above article, it was interesting to find that the Bible Training Institute, 731, Gt. Western Rd. Glasgow has clearly discovered some method of assessing the nature and veracity of inner experience. Their advert in 'Crusade' magazine states; -

'Only candidates who have a personal experience of Christ as their Saviour and Lord and accept the Bible as the authoritative Word of God are considered for entry. British Applicants are normally required to have at least one 'O' level certificate.'

A Research Suggestion

Imagine if, every Sunday evening and maybe once or twice during the week, too, you could go and watch, even talk to, someone who believes that they can communicate with extra-terrestrial intelligences, and can produce some sort of evidence to support that belief. Sometimes, they would see entities round the chair where they sit. They would hear the entities speak, would talk and laugh with them. Sometimes, they would see entities standing near other people who were present, and would pass on messages from the entities. On occasion, they would claim that the entities wished to speak through them, and there would then be a marked change in the voice of the person making the contact, and in their turn of phrase. At such times, observations and advice from intelligences said to be independent of the person speaking would often be passed on to the others present.

Such an opportunity is, of course, available, in Spiritualist Churches, hundreds of them, all over the country; it never ceases to amaze me how few of us involved in paranormal research and investigation have spent any time in observing clairvoyants and psychics working in such circumstances, when we would travel hundreds of miles to interview a CE4 UFO witness, or to see a recurrent apparition.

Spiritualism is, in every way, a 'contactee' religion and though it assumes generally that the contacts are with the surviving 'spirits' of those who have lived and died on this earth, what actually occurs, and is said to occur, is open to a wide variety of interpretations. The claimed and apparent phenomena recurrent in Spiritualism include ESP, healing, reincarnation, aura reading, automatic writing, clairvoyance, clairaudience, trance experience, speaking in tongues and, much more rarely, direct voice (speech generally audible and not emitting from the medium) and physical (ectoplasmic) phenomena. Beyond this, the archetypal figures interpreted as 'spirit guides' often bear a close, even uncanny resemblance to reports of UFO entities.

The scope for investigation is endless, though it must be remembered that anything that occurs, occurs in the context of someone's faith, and I would think that experience with psychics, or pseudo-psychics in this context would be an excellent basis for more outlandish, less well-defined investigations.

Naturally, Spiritualistic phenomena have been investigated before, often stringently, aggressively, even destructively. But never, so far as I am aware has it been opened up to the sort of approach that many of us have developed in dealing with anomalous, often disturbing human experience; the sort of approach that has led to the formulation of the code of ethics featured in this issue. Clearly, our methods must be adapted, and great concern shown. Nonetheless, I think that the phenomena are well worthy of investigation, and that this is an area in which we ought, because of what apparently occurs, to become involved.

I would like to suggest that we treat this as a research project, and I will try to prepare some background material for anyone who would like to be involved (and who sends 30p in stamps to cover copying and postage!). Perhaps anyone interested would like to try one or two services and demonstrations, and then write in with their comments and ideas for investigation. We will publish a progress report in CG3, and perhaps, eventually, publish our results in booklet form. As research projects go I think it should be a fascinating, albeit clandestine and anonymous, experiment.



LETTERS

While we will always be very happy to receive letters, we hope they will not all be as long as that received from Paul Devereux, author, and editor of 'The Ley Hunter' in response to a number of pieces in CG 1! However, we did feel that the content warranted publication in full, and that we should make the effort to find space. Then we decided that we ought, in turn, to give Jenny Randles and Hilary Evans the right of reply. We asked them if they wanted to - they did

From Paul Devereux.

I read through the first issue of 'Common Ground' avidly. I expected revelations and I got them - but not the sort I'd been expecting. Having just completed writing a book about UFO's for Turnstone (UFO's and Earth Energies, due Autumn or Spring) I have become pretty aware of the differences in approach to the enigma taken by different researchers. I had thought the new breed of researchers such as Jenny Randles and Hilary Evans were bringing new clarity of thought and common sense to the whole subject. I learn from their writings in CG that I was partially wrong in assuming this. I fear that the pendulum swing away from the ravages of the ETH may be taking us into another night of dogmatism. It looks like a new, balanced, clear approach to the UFO problem may again be sacrificed.

Take Jenny's piece. I agree with her that the close-encounter, repeater-type experience is a different experience to the LITS type of witness perception. My personal investigations into the Winchester experience assured me that we were dealing with a psychic event rather than a UFO one. (Incidentally, one of the film crew I worked with on the case claimed to have seen Mrs. Bowles physically move a wardrobe with her elbow in an apparent attempt to reproduce poltergeist activity. This may or may not be true, but I suppose there is a great pressure on such people to 'come up with the goods'.) Mrs. Bowles' teenage son confirmed that he had witnessed lightball phenomena as a child at their former home, and I admit that I completely believe him. On the other hand, I personally came to the conclusion that in this case there had been no objective UFO event, but rather a complex psychic eruption. (Mrs. Bowles certainly gives the impression of bottling-up much anger or emotional energy of some sort). Even the pattern of the dominant female perceived by Jenny doesn't hold. John Day of the 'Aveley Abduction' doesn't strike me as passive or hen-pecked. I have gone into great detail with John and his wife over their experiences, and my own feeling is that here, again, there was probably no objective UFO event, but an extraordinary out-of-body experience. Their experiences were archetypal and John did tell me that to this day he cannot be sure that the UFO in which he found himself was solid. Moreover, one of their children saw their 'astral bodies' depart their physical forms. I am pretty convinced that there was some form of external, possibly geophysical, trigger that set off this remarkable episode.

I do not necessarily disagree with Jenny's overall attitude to these types of event. Where I think we go wrong is to assume that by studying them we will learn anything more about the nature of UFO's. I think they are different mechanisms entirely, simply drawing on the same image store as that associated with UFO's. I explain this further in my book.

What really disturbed me in Jenny's CG article was her comment about the amount of time Playfair spent with the Enfield family compared to the time she spent with the Oakenholt family. Is it really more objective not to witness a phenomenon than to witness it? Jenny's answer seems to be yes. This is the most dangerous assumption to have appeared on the UFO scene in years - that by not witnessing a phenomenon an investigator is more likely to be objective. I write as both a UFO witness and researcher. Non-witness subjectivity is the single most problematic element in UFO investigation and evaluation. Yet the assumption has become deep-seated that it has to be the witness who is most prone to subjectivity. (I grow weary of non-witnesses to whom I describe my major UFO experience telling me what it was I really saw). UFO investigators are the most patronising group of human beings on Earth.

With this basic assumption goes another one; if two people are present at a UFO event and only one of them sees it, it is automatically assumed that the misperception or whatever has to be attributed to that person. Yet no one seems to question the possibility that the other person, who fails to see the UFO, may be so disturbed by it that mental censoring cuts in - a form of real-time amnesia. This effect can be experimentally induced through hypnosis, and is called 'negative hallucination'. Let's have a bit more talk about this than the obsession with hallucinations, for a change. There are not only misperceptions - there are missed perceptions, too. Too many easy, fundamental, are being unconsciously made at the present time, and it worries me. I still do not see objectivity rearing its head. What we are getting now is something far more dangerous than the ludicrous ETH; we have a genre of subjectivity masquerading as objectivity. It will take us a long way from UFO's.

This can be seen in Jenny's last paragraph where she urges that 'experimental paranormal ufology' be carried out rather than the cataloguing of LITS or, as she has the nerve to state, 'devising airey-fairey theories' (aren't we all guilty of that?) I thought it was only butch to be an ETH adherent; now, apparently, one has to be into paranormal ufology to avoid being airey-fairey!

The assumption that studying contactees etc. is going to throw light on genuine UFO events is in my view a dangerous one. I think they are different animals. 'But', say the New Iconoclasts, 'what is a genuine UFO event?' Well, I'll tell them: it's the experience they've never had. Actually, it's worse than that - it's the experience they don't want to have. It is less easy to be patronising to oneself.

Of course, the circular argument will go round and round, as is the way with circles. The New Iconoclasts will say, 'Yes, but what is reality?' and so on until they disappear up their collective navel - if not some other aperture. I've popped my pills and have been to Godhead and back; I've seen the mental structure we call 'reality' dissolve into vaster seas of creation. 'Reality' is a relative term. Relative to perceived reality, the core UFO event is as real as your local pub, or the jumbo jet that just roared overhead. It is no more real, nor is it any less real, than that. It is not a media event, a psychic conflagration or a psychological construct or imprint (which is not to say that many UFO accounts in the literature may not be). There is plenty of investigation of UFO's to be done yet before it will be valid to question the parameters of consensus reality in order to explain UFO's and UFO reports.

I'm as convinced as any New Iconoclast that 'abductions', MIB's and so on are part of the psychological ambience that has been generated around the fact of UFO observations. Myth-making is, I fully agree, part of human activity. But I'm not terribly concerned with such ambient material, as interesting as it may or may not be in its own right - it does not add to our understanding of the core UFO event. It merely tells us of collective human responses to a

situation in our midst that we cannot understand. Outright disbelief and dismissal of the core UFO event is part of this psychological ambience as well.

I'm fearful that the New Iconoclasm, by going off at a tangent on the trail of an effect rather than a cause, will end up concluding that there is no core UFO phenomenon, and that, quite simply, will be a mistake. And ufology will be burdened with yet another subjective package. Nor does Hilary get us much further; his 'expose' of the Dyfed wave is a non-event by a non-witness. He says that his investigations astonished him in a quite different way than he had anticipated. Do you know? - I don't believe him. I think he sensed the iconoclastic zeal coursing through his veins as soon as he turned his face towards Dyfed.

And what did he uncover? Basically, the dubious literary practices of two pulp paperback writers; I didn't need Hilary's expedition to warn me of them. Oh, and Hilary didn't like the cover picture of 'The Uninvited'. Oh yes, and Hilary thinks that if you go looking for something, and you find it, then that is open to suspicion. (Presumably it is not suspicious if you don't find what you go looking for.) He'd rather rely on luck. And he didn't much like the schoolteacher waxing lyrical after having had a peak experience (Hilary wouldn't get on with me then: I went into intellectual shock for weeks after my Ravensbourne experience.) But we all know how stiff-upper-lip and objective Hilary would be, don't we - Or am I being nearly as patronising as he?

I was delighted that Hilary found the MIB rumour in Dyfed to be a load of old cobblers, if only because my own suggestions as to the nature of UFO's in my forthcoming book predict that all such reports do not directly relate to the core UFO phenomenon . . . they are part of the ambient psychology I readily agree does surround the subject of UFO's. Such extraneous material is fanned by myth-making writings. Has Hilary never been guilty of writing on such topics and adding his bit to the myth-machine? Interestingly, Hilary has less on which to specifically criticise Pugh and the late F.W. Holiday. But then, they're not pulp paperback writers, are they? (Not that I'm saying that the authors of 'Dyfed Enigma' are above criticism - but who is?).

Hilary has done a fair job of exposing the pulp writers but has left the Dyfed wave unscathed. His work is only of corrective value, to those who used those writers as sources. As for Pugh; were the incidents he recorded originally reported or not? Hilary never quite gets round to telling us. I do share Hilary's displeasure, as a purist, in seeing jumped-up, ripped-off accounts of events, and downright misinformation getting out to a large audience of the general public. We suffer that sort of thing in Earth Mysteries, too. Ironically, the more zappy and crude such stuff is, the greater its commercial success seems to be.

I think it might be a good idea to remove the Ripperston sightings from the Dyfed data altogether, because if the line of my argument is correct, much if not all that went on there is nothing to do with genuine UFO phenomena. It is interesting that when geologist Paul McCartney and I plotted the most explicitly located reported UFO events in the Dyfed wave against those areas of the peninsula for which there was detailed geological information, Ripperston Farm was the worst match to geological faults of any of them! We will scurry back to our material if we're in time, and delete the Ripperston dot with acknowledgement to Hilary and CG.

An unexplained atmospheric phenomenon earthing itself on fault-ridden Stack Rocks is interpreted by some as a UFO returning to an underground base; by Hilary as a dubious perception affected by the setting sun. (Was the sun visibly setting when the alleged incident occurred? Was it setting behind the

rocks from the vantage-point of the witness? Hilary doesn't say. In any case, even if the rocks were in shadow, how would this affect the perception of an atmospheric phenomenon homing in on the location?) I think both extremes are likely to be wrong. They are not the only alternative explanations available. Hilary is, in fact profoundly guilty of polarising the interpretation of UFO data. It is not necessarily an 'either/or' situation as he presents it. People can and do misinterpret what they see on occasion - but that doesn't mean that what they have misinterpreted is automatically a known phenomenon.

As for Rose Granville's experience related to Stack Rocks . . . well. Who knows? Was she using binoculars? Hilary doesn't say. In any case, 5 kms. does sound further than 3 miles doesn't it? If the figures were brightly clad as they claimed to be, then they probably would have been visible to the unaided eye over an unobstructed view of such a distance. As for the flash over the rocks yes (yawn) it could have been a Brawdy aircraft turning. But in my experience local people are quick to notice unusual occurrences to those habitually happening in their environment. In 1969, my wife and I together with two friends saw brilliant white lights over our then home in N.London. These skies are where aircraft 'stack' while awaiting landing at Heathrow. We were used to those: these lights were different. The next day the 'Evening News' and 'Evening Standard' carried reports of many witnesses seeing white and multi-coloured lights over N.London and parts of the Home Counties. There had been an unusual event, and it hadn't been triggered by the media. I'm sorry to emphasise that, especially as the New Iconoclasts seem to need to believe UFO's and wave zones are media events. In any event, a flash is a flash - it will catch the eye. If the flash wasn't a turning aircraft, well . . . Hilary might be quite correct in his suspicions, but there is nothing in his published account to support him.

Finally, Kevin poses the question: 'Is there no case, event, or perception to which the 'paranormal' or 'unidentified' labels would, eventually belong, given sufficiently exhaustive investigation?' Well, I think there probably isn't, given the depths of non-witness subjectivity. But who will vouch for the objectivity of such investigations? And what a terrible waste of human effort, when there really are inexplicable phenomena sharing this planet with us! I recall the Lakenheath case being 'debunked' . . . yet the investigators omitted to question one of the key figures - the radar operator. It's a seductively easier practise than trying to find an answer to the enigma. The New Iconoclasts shouldn't think themselves so clever as to be able to ignore the old adage 'There's no smoke without fire!'

Beware the Protestant Puritanical Purge Syndrome (you can suffer from the PPPS even if you're not a Protestant - or even a Christian! It's part of our cultural matrix.) We see it in economic matters in this country at present; purging will somehow do us good, no matter how damaging it might be. As in the economic variant of this recurring psychological motif, however, its appearance is usually a result of mental bankruptcy. In ufology there are plenty of new ideas to be forged (and who is to say that some of these ideas may not be the correct ones?) and new ways of looking at the data. There is still much more to be learned from what is already to hand. The fact that the New Iconoclasts haven't two positive ideas to rub together doesn't give them license to announce that it is the end of the road for investigation of a core phenomenon and that the answer to the enigma must lie in the phenomenology of the reportage of UFO events. Some of us are still thinking.

Roth Jenny and Kevin write in dark tones in Northern Ufology no.83 of the Dyfed wave being 'exploded' as a 'myth' and being put under 'grave suspicion' by Hilary. Yet Hilary's material as so far published does no such thing! Jenny and Kevin are also myth-making. To the careless reader, the Dyfed wave is now disproved. Ahh . . . we haven't got down to objectivity yet, my friends.

Nevertheless, the New Iconoclasts are sweeping away the old cobwebs. That needs doing to a large extent. But I hope they'll keep in mind another proverb; 'If you wish to live and thrive, let the spider stay alive!'

From Hilary Evans.

I do not know what makes Paul Devereux think he has the right to go about pinning labels on people. But he should be careful about it for, by so doing, he is liable to call his own judgement and motivations into question.

His categorising of Jenny Randles and myself as 'the New Iconoclasts' would be too absurd to warrant a rebuttal, were it not that a more serious issue is involved, one that is typified by this dangerous tendency to put people into pigeonholes - 'he's a nuts-and-bolts man', 'she's a New Ufologist' and so on. Let us take (and who else can I speak for?) my own position. I am by inclination a 'nuts-and-bolts man', in that I would like to find solid evidence for the physical reality of the UFO phenomenon; I firmly believe that in due course we shall find an explanation for it which can be couched in scientific terms. But at the same time, I believe no less firmly that science will have to extend its bounds to accommodate the UFO phenomenon. For, like many other anomalous phenomena studied by psychical researchers, ley hunters, Fortean, and their kind, the UFO phenomenon presents features which defy the currently available scientific information bank. Consequently, I look to all available sources of information - mythology, psychology, parapsychology, sociology, the literature of mysticism - in short anywhere, however unlikely, that helpful clues may be found. (I do not even rule out a possibility of a connection between ley lines and UFO's.) I dare say this attitude could qualify me for admission, should I seek it, to the 'New Ufologists' club.

But how, I wonder, do I qualify for this new label that Paul Devereux has created? Because I am not so gullible as to accept all the evidence that's set before me, without giving it a second look? That makes me an iconoclast?

Expressed thus, the charge is plainly ridiculous; so one is forced to ask, what makes an intelligent and perceptive student of anomalous phenomena react in this curious way? I don't pretend to have an answer to that question, because I don't know Paul Devereux well enough. But frankly, I am both surprised and sorry that he has responded in this way, not so much because he calls my judgement into question but because it displays a dismaying lack of judgement in himself, someone we had all been inclined to respect as writer, editor, and investigator.

As an editor, he must know that a few pages in 'Common Ground' are totally inadequate for detailed findings in so complex an affair as the West Wales sightings. My article was clearly not intended as an investigation report, but as a demonstration of the multifarious pitfalls awaiting the investigator of a complex event. 'That such a demonstration is needed by the general reader, if not by the likes of Paul Devereux (who big-headedly writes 'I didn't need Hilary's expedition to tell me that', as though my article was intended for his eyes alone), is illustrated by the fact that a certain paranormal research group was just about to undertake its own re-evaluation of the 1977 events, unaware that the published accounts represent anything but solid fact. As for dismissing my investigation as a 'non-event by a non-witness'; this is to attack all investigation by anyone of anything they were not personally involved in; which is absurd.

I shall not attempt to refute such suggestions as that I travelled to Wales 'sensing the iconoclastic zeal coursing through my veins', and other childish remarks. But I will close by demonstrating the silliness of his remark that 'the New Iconoclasts shouldn't think themselves so clever as to feel able to ignore the old adage, 'there's no smoke without fire'. He can hardly have failed to read the closing sentences of my article; they read, 'I think (Pauline Hewison) may have had a genuine experience. It is a pity that it should have been buried beneath such an avalanche of fiction, fantasy, and falsehood.' Is that the voice of Iconoclasm? If so, I need a new dictionary.

From Jenny Randles.

I suffered a curious conflict of emotions when I read Paul Devereux's letter to the editor. In one sense I felt pleased that CG had achieved one of its objectives, and predicted a cut-and-thrust, to the point debate. Nothing at all wrong with that. Indeed, there is far too little of it, and this four way literary argument can perhaps be of much benefit. However, it is more than a little odd that Paul draws the conclusions he does on the evidence that we presented. He seems to be displaying marvellous intuition, but, sadly, not for the truth.

Since Hilary has responded to the charges against himself, I will confine myself only to those levelled at me, merely noting that Hilary's report is terribly important. Of course he has not proven all of ufology to be a myth (or even all of the Dyfed material) but he has shown up the immense problems we all face when handling something as complex as a set of strange phenomena. How can one afford to ignore human nature, psychology, and sociology? All Hilary is guilty of is not ignoring them! I doubt he finds that cause for apology.

As for myself, it was odd reading what Paul had to say because I found myself agreeing with most of his points, before coming back to the recognition that he was making them because he claimed I argued in opposition! I feel like someone with amnesia who has just been told they are supposed to be playing for the other team. Never have I argued that there is no physical reality behind the UFO enigma. I have argued, precisely like Paul, that we have both a physically real UFO enigma, and a separate subjective phenomenon (as evidenced by the contacts). I made this point very clearly at a lecture in Birmingham in October 1980. Paul was there so I amazed he seems to believe I think otherwise.

Whether these two phenomena are distinct, or are related (e.g. in the sense of a natural phenomenon precipitating the subjective contacts) I do not know. Paul argues plausibly for the latter, and I have said more than my fair share on the topic, so I do not feel a need to defend myself on that score. Remarkably, Paul and I seem to share very similar views. On this point I would urge Paul to read 'Alien Contact' when it is published in September, before he judges me too harshly. He will see there, in more depth than before, my opinion on the contactee phenomenon. I suspect he will not disagree with too much.

The point over which Paul seems to take most issue is the limited time Paul (Whetnall) and I spent with the Sunderland family, as compared to that which Guy Playfair devoted to 'living in' at Enfield, and my suggestion that my course of action was preferable. This is a complicated question, and I talk more of it in the 'ethical factors' piece to which I referred. Briefly, an investigator is meant to be an objective reporter. I have learned from personal experience, and from seeing the difficulties of others, that the best way of seeming impartial is not to get over-involved. I contend that Paul and I did an adequate job at Oakenholt, but we stepped back from the urge to see UFO's, lights, psychic phenomena etc. ourselves. Others did not do this. Several investigators conducted experiments and spent a lot more time with the family. They did this with our backing and cooperation. They participated in a few minor events, which are referred to in our book. The point is, to an outsider, how valid is their 'evidence'? And had we spent so much time there that we became very close friends of the family (obviously we could not help becoming friends) then we would have been quite unable to separate ourselves from their experiences, or record them dispassionately. Naturally, Paul is right. There is a sense in which it is more objective to experience than not to experience. But he must recognise that there is a sense in which the reverse is true.

JOURNAL UPDATE AND NEWS

I believe our choice was correct in the circumstances in which we found ourselves, but I would not be foolish enough to insist that such an approach should apply universally. If Paul seriously thinks I did not want to see, because I did not want to believe, he is sadly in error. I can only refer him to the report in 'UFO's: a British Viewpoint' on the first hand experiences of Peter Warrington and myself with a contactee called Gary. In that case the alternative approach was applied, but very few will accept our testimony as detached and impersonal. It's a frying pan and fire situation, I'm afraid, but I do honestly feel that spending day after day with witnesses to an alleged set of paranormal experiences can be more damaging to objectivity than it can be productive.

Again, 'British Viewpoint' clearly calls for studies of non-witnesses. We talked of the Cairo Mill, Oldham, encounter where one security guard (and a cat) experienced a close encounter but his colleague, nearby, saw nothing. Then we suggested (with reference to other cases) that perhaps it was the non-witness whose perceptions were blinkered, rather than the way round most people might presume. Indeed, this 'selection' factor by the phenomenon is, to my mind, one of the most intriguing and provocative. Time after time we find witnesses describing things such as 'the area went very quiet' or 'all the traffic just stopped'. We refer to this often in 'British Viewpoint', and discuss its implications. It is highly significant that this tends to occur in connection with close encounters in areas where there are other sensory stimuli (which are thus short-circuited) and where an incredibly prominent phenomenon manifests itself but is not seen by those who do not enter what we called in the book the 'sphere of influence' of the UFO event.

This might be an 'airey-fairey theory', by the way. In 'UFO Study' I explain my attitude to theorising as opposed to experimenting. Of course we need to create theories, and of course we all do it. But what use is a theory nobody can test? If I generate the theory that UFO's are alien bioplasmic devices grown by the metal-eating creatures of a planet encircling the star Epsilon Eridani, how the hell does one either prove or disprove it? Yet to postulate (as Paul seems to) earth energies triggering something akin to hallucinations, is a theory which can be tested. That is not to say that UFO's will not turn out after all to come from Epsilon Eridani, but at least we can try to examine testable hypotheses first. That is where ufology has gone so sadly wrong in the past, and I refuse to withdraw what I consider a perfectly reasonable suggestion. We do need less theorising and more experimentation, be we scientifically minded or not. As for Paul's insulting comment that 'the New Iconoclasts haven't two positive ideas to rub together', I simply refer him to my own books where I myself have more than two (that is without reference to the positive ideas of any other iconoclast).

Finally, I looked up in my dictionary what 'iconoclast' means. It (Chambers) says, "One who assails old cherished errors and superstitions". All I can say is that if that is an insult, who needs compliments? Any serious researcher who, by this definition, is not an iconoclast, should never have become a researcher.

Editor's note.

I wouldn't exactly say that this correspondence is closed, but any further contributions to it will have to be jolly good to have much chance of appearing, and I won't guarantee that we will be able to publish them in full. Thanks.

In CG1 we published a lengthy list of addresses, prices, and details of journals, magazines, and newsletters that we felt to be pertinent to our readers' range of interests. We don't have the space to publish the full list each issue, but we will try and amend it each issue to keep it current, and to introduce any new publications, or catch up with ones we have missed. Please inform us if there is anything you feel should appear here.

FORTEAN TIMES (ed. Bob Rickard) has changed its address to; -

BM - Fortean Times, London, WC1N 3XX. Snappy, isn't it?

Frontiers of Science ask me to stress that they are not 'commercial'!

NEW LISTINGS.

INFO Journal. Journal of the International Fortean Organisation. Bi-monthly, mainly Fortean material, with quality content and production. Enquire re. the current sub. to; INFO, 7317, Baltimore Avenue, College Park, MD 20740. U.S.A.

Full Moon. A charming, thorough, and well-produced Fortean/anomaly oriented journal from, but not always about, Hawaii. Well worth a look. Enquiries to; Jacob A. Davidson, 1981-B, St. Louis Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii 96816, U.S.A.

Quicksilver Messenger. A good, quarterly large-format magazine, published in Sussex, and having the flavour of that area, particularly with Earth Mysteries material, much of which seems to be entirely original. £3.20p a year from Chris Ashton, 26a, Wilbury Avenue, Hove, Sussex.

Helios News. Journal of the Institute for Wholelife and Extraterrestrial Studies. Philosophy and advice from extraterrestrials, and related material on healing, meditation etc. Pub. 3 times yearly, at 35p. a copy (\$1 pa.) from Lynne Halsall, 8, The Ridgeway, Northop Hall, Clwyd, North Wales, CH7 6JK.

S.P.R. Newsletter. A new and additional benefit of SPR membership, published 3 times a year. Approachable, informative, nicely edited by Sue Blackmore. Sent out with the SPR Journal (see CG1).

Azoth. The Magazine of the Concord. Quarterly. Magical experience, mystical experience, alchemy, and quite a bit I don't understand. 50p a copy from, Michael Magee, 42, Hay Lane, Kingsbury, London, NW9 0ND.

The Skeptical Inquirer. Quarterly. Journal of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. Involved with it are names as well-known as Philip Klass, James Randi, Eric Dingwall, James Oberg and Isaac Asimov, and its work is thorough, impressive, and clearly well-funded. If only it were not so joyless and cynical, it would be easier to read and to accept, but its work must be seriously considered and, if possible, intelligently refuted. \$15 a year from Skeptical Inquirer, Box 229, Central Park Station, Buffalo, N.Y. 14215, U.S.A.

Two Worlds. 'A monthly magazine featuring Spiritualism and the Supernormal'. From the publishers of 'Psychic News'. Seldom objective or troubled with proof, but regularly covers areas of interest such as mediumship, survival, and Sai Baba. £5.60p.a. from Two Worlds, 23, Great Queen Street, London, WC2B 5RB.

The Pre-1947 UFO Bulletin. Possibly the shortest journal in the field - just one sheet of intriguing and original A4 from the hand of Nigel Watson. No price - contact Nigel for details at, westfield Cottage, Crowle Bank Road, Althorpe, South Humberside, DN17 3H%.

Spiritual Counterfeits Project Newsletter. An evangelical organisation which produces investigative material of a high standard on 'heretic' cults within Christianity, and also on UFO's, healing, and psi. No actual price is fixed for the newsletter, but donations are requested. Many other publications, too. Write to, SCP, P.O. Box 2418, Berkeley, CA 94702, U.S.A.

Meeting the Third Millennium. 'A Journal for all those concerned with the problems of today and tomorrow'. Emanating from Anthroposophy, and the work of Rudolf Steiner, a nice, friendly, production concerned with Millennial phenomena, beliefs, prophecies, and comments. Only 50p. an issue from Roma Browne, 2, Riverside, Forest Row, Sussex.

Please continue to inform us of journals, preferably by sending us copies (returnable if you wish) so that we can abstract from them. We hope, though we have rubbed one or two editors up the wrong way with our comments, that this is a service of value not only to our readers, but also to the journals that we list.

Forthcoming Events.

There is a lot more going on in the U.K. than just meetings held by BUFORA and the S.P.R., but that is all that seems to be to hand for this issue. If the information about meetings, conferences, etc. reaches us on time we will do our best to publish it in the relevant issue, wherever in the country the event may be taking place and, within reason, whatever it is about! Anyway, for those of you in or near London (who are pretty well the only ones to gain full benefit from these organisations anyway!) all the following meetings are held in the Lecture Hall of Kensington Central Library, Campden Hill Road, W8. BUFORA meetings start at 7.00p.m., S.P.R. meetings at 6.30p.m.

BUFORA 5.9.81. Timothy Good on 'The New Debunkers'. He feels that in their endeavours to gain 'Scientific Respectability' for the subject, there is a trend among many leading researchers to invoke increasingly abstruse theories, thereby minimising and debunking the significance of our subject.

3.10.81. Stephen Jenkins, author of 'The Undiscovered Country', on 'Some current scientific views of Time Travel in the light of the theory and practice of certain Tantric Buddhists'.

7.11.81. The Rt. Hon. Earl of Clancarty (a.k.a. Brinsley Le Poer Trench) on 'The UFO Cover-Up', and the House of Lords UFO Study Group.

S.P.R. 10.9.81. Maurice Grosse on 'The Poltergeist Enigma' - the speaker discusses his personal experiences.

8.10.81. Julian Isaacs, M.A. on 'The Mini Lab'. - A new method for investigating spontaneous psychokinesis.

10.11.81. Dan Lloyd (who is very much involved with 'Meeting the Third Millennium', mentioned above) on, 'Psychic Phenomena in the light of Anthroposophy'. More particularly, as related to the work of Steiner.

Following the considerable success of the 'Hallucinations and Illusions' piece in CG1, we are happy to be able to present some facts and explanations, together with some research suggestions, from another area of investigation closely related to our own. The incidence of communication through, or even, as in some CE UFO cases, in spite of, strange or unknown languages or pseudo-languages is surprisingly frequent, and its historical occurrence has a much sounder basis than, for instance, any of the 'Biblical UFO' interpretations. David Christie-Murray is perhaps better-qualified than almost any other authority in this country to write about 'tongues' as they may relate to the paranormal. A former distinguished member of the S.P.R., he is now one of the guiding lights behind the foundation of ASSAF, and is also the author of a book about 'tongues', 'Voices from the Gods', (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) and, recently, 'Reincarnation; Ancient Beliefs and Modern Evidence', (David & Charles, 1981), both of which are highly recommended.

Glossolalia and Xenolalia

by David Christie-Murray.

Glossolalia (speaking gibberish or pseudo-languages) and xenolalia (paranormal speaking in genuine foreign languages) are phenomena far more common than is generally realised. Pseudo-languages in this context are not the made-up sort that children use but a type of speech, produced under conditions of hysteria, trance or ecstasy that has some of the characteristics of language and, indeed, sounds intelligible, but is characterised by features of its own including, among others, a much higher proportion of the common sounds in the speaker's native tongue, a much lower percentage of the rare ones, a tendency to repetition of syllables, giving a stuttering effect, a superfluity of syllables ending in vowels, and a general sameness of expression and monotony of tone.

Experts in linguistics can usually judge whether any given specimen of spoken sound is a language or a pseudo-language, even if the language is one with which they are unacquainted. There are four main divisions under which glossolalia and xenolalia may be studied. The first is medical, from the language of lunatics to the spontaneous speaking in tongues of normal people in their own homes. The latter phenomenon is not uncommon; two people may be sitting together, one may ask a question and the other reply - to his, or, more usually, her, own surprise, in tongues. Christians, quietly praying in their own homes (one had the experience 'while opening a can of beans') can suddenly find themselves talking to God in tongues, the speech often accompanied by a feeling of release, fulfilment, and euphoria. Psychologists, however, attribute these examples of motor automata to other causes.

While most of the ravings of lunacy may be dismissed, there are cases on record of both spoken and written private languages logically developed by the patient's mind. For example, a patient, F.R., studied by A. Maeder (La Langue d'un aliene, analyse d'un cas de glossolalie. Archives de psychologie, 1910) carried on lengthy conversations in a unique language of his own with imaginary friends and foes, and filled many exercise books with apparent nonsense. Maeder discovered hidden sense behind the ostensible gibberish, a rich vocabulary and a powerful myth, although the syntax was infantile. F.R. saw himself as a great and noble man engaged in an epic struggle against enemies led by Satan himself, speaking in a language which made no effort to communicate, but which suited his fantasy world, in which he needed a personal aristocratic tongue which should not be understood by common men. Tape-recordings might reveal other languages incubated in the minds of other mental patients which could throw light upon their thought processes.

There are also many examples in the literature of abnormal psychology of patients recovering the use of languages spoken in their first few years of life, but completely forgotten until delirium, trance, anaesthesia, concussion, approaching death or some other crisis temporarily resurrected them. Such languages are recovered usually in a non-responsive way, that is, the patients cannot converse intelligently in them with other speakers of the tongue but merely recite childhood prayers or other remembered snippets. An interesting example of 'crisis' xenolalia is that of my first wife, brought up among Bengali-speaking Pakistanis until the age of seven. When she was in her mid-forties, having completely forgotten the language, she shouted 'Look out!' in Bengali to two Pakistanis in London who almost walked under a bus. She thought she had shouted in English, not knowing that she had ever even learned the Bengali for 'look out,' until the visitors expressed surprise at her acquaintance with their tongue.

Foreign languages spoken in alleged previous lives, that emerge during hypnotic regression are normally cryptomesic. Responsive xenolalia in such a 'life' would be very strong evidence for reincarnation if it could be demonstrated that the subject had never been exposed to the language in the present life. There are one or two cases of this, but they are not strong, and are vulnerable to the criticisms of sceptics.

The second division is anthropological. Glossolalia and some apparent xenolalia are to be found in a very wide range of human cultures throughout the world and at different stages of development and, as such, are a proper study of anthropologists allied with experts in linguistics. The advent of the tape-recorder has made it possible now for anthropologists to take down the utterances of medicine men and shamans and provide linguistic specialists with material for them to analyse at leisure. Many of the tongues thus spoken, claimed to be the languages of gods, spirits, ancestors, or totem animals are almost certainly glossolalia and not languages at all. But there are cases on record where the medicine man has spoken the genuine language of a tribe living some distance away (perhaps a travelling forebear of the shaman visited the far tribe, learned its language and passed it on to descendants as a mystic tongue) or where he has spoken an archaic form of his own speech. An example of the latter is the custom of the kings of a Uganda tribe, each one of whom had a 'mandwa' or medium to represent him after his death. The 'mandwa' spoke not only in obsolete forms of the Luganda language up to three centuries old but also manifested the personalities of the dead monarchs, transmitted orally and mimetically from 'mandwa' to 'mandwa' down the ages. Shaman's tongues are not to be regarded as necessarily gibberish - they may well be worth recording and studying.

Christian tongues are the third division. The Biblical sanction for speaking in tongues contained in the record of the apostles' xenolalia in Acts, Chapter 2, and other incidents recorded in the same book, and supported by St. Paul's dissertation on the practice as manifested in the worship of the Church at Corinth (1 Corinthians, Chapters 12-14) has been authority enough for some, usually unorthodox, Christians to indulge in tongues down through the ages. It cannot be known how widespread it was in apostolic days - the most that can be said is that the Corinthian Church was probably not unique in its use of tongues - but by the end of the second century A.D. it was frowned upon by the orthodox. With other psychic abilities it was regarded by the Ritulae Romanum (about 1000 A.D.) as a sign of devil possession, unless the saintliness of the speaker justified the speech. St. Iachomius (745-1407), for example, and St. Hildegard (1098-1179) both spoke mystic languages written in unique alphabets, a phenomenon later repeated by some Spiritualists. Specimens of St. Hildegard's language were preserved and analysed later as a jumble of German, Latin, and misunderstood Hebrew. The general view of the Western Church at least, both Catholic and Protestant, was that the gift of tongues was given temporarily to the early Church to enable it to evangelise swiftly and efficiently, but that now the Holy Spirit used different methods. In this respect, the age of miracles was past. Certain Christian sects and parties, however, such as the Camisards and Jansenists in seventeenth to eighteenth-century France, some 'Enthusiasts' and, later, Irvingites in Britain, and the Shakers and early Mormons in America, all used varieties of tongue-speaking. The practice was widespread in some other American communities, and it was there that modern Pentecostalism was born, with its emphasis on the Gifts of the Spirit, which include the speaking in and interpretation of tongues. The phenomenal spread of Pentecostalism in the twentieth century and its overflow in to main-stream Christianity in the important interdenominational Charismatic Movement has meant that glossolalia is probably taken far more seriously today than it has been since the first days of Christianity.

It seems to have been recognised by St. Paul himself that some of the languages spoken were not tongues of men but 'of angels', in other words what are today called 'language-types'. But early Pentecostalist literature is full of claims of foreigners being addressed and won for Christ by believers exhorting them in their own languages, of which the exhorters normally knew not a word. A favourite variety of this story is of the atheist Jew coming to mock, having his personal history recounted to him in Hebrew by Pentecostalists ignorant of the tongue, being convicted of sin and cataclysmically converted; for there seems to be particular kudos attached to the winning of a Jew and an atheist in one and the same person. It is not cynical to say that I have not yet come across a single anecdote of this kind that is susceptible of proof, nor, so far as I know, has any other serious investigator into speaking in tongues. If any reader can put me in touch with the converter and/or the converted in a case of this kind, I should be extremely grateful.

W.J. Samarin, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Toronto, who has made a special study of Pentecostalist tongues, has shown clearly that normal specimens of them are language-types, not languages. This is not to say that no xenolalia is ever spoken - for only a tiny fraction of the tongues spoken in Pentecostalist Churches has been recorded and studied - but that no specimen of xenolalia has yet been recorded. Nor is it to say that glossolalia is self-delusion and useless. It is as legitimate a form of worship as prayer and the singing of psalms and hymns and is, indeed, in my opinion, to be equated with worship in music rather than in language. When tongues are interpreted it is their general mood that is explained by someone on the same wavelength as the speaker - they are not translated. Just as someone ignorant of

the title of Mendelssohn's 'Spring Song' could interpret it as a message of gaiety, happiness or perhaps the euphoria of young love or the bickering of a sunshiny stream. No one who has heard the flow of lovely sound coming from the lips of a genuine worshipper, often inarticulate in his normal state, can doubt the genuineness of the euphoria and the sincerity of his adoration.

Speakers in tongues in the main-line denominations today seldom claim to be xenolalists. They emphasise the value of tongues in prayer and worship either devotionally by themselves or in small groups at unity with each other, particularly useful when they do not know for what they should pray. There is a striking story told by Sherrill of a minister called to a girl so badly injured that even if she lived she might only be a vegetable. Should he pray for death, which might be more merciful, or life? He prayed in tongues, feeling the more passive he was, the greater the effectiveness of God's working through him. The girl recovered, which, a sceptic might say, she would have done anyway. But at least the minister's mind was given peace.

By no means the last word has been written on Christian tongues, and there is a large field of investigation for the researcher who is prepared to approach the subject with respect for the views of worshippers, and an open mind. There is also scope for research in the fourth division under which tongues may be classified - Spiritualist xenolalia. Here again, in spite of a vast literature of claims made of sensitives addressing messages from dead friends or relatives in their own languages, languages totally unknown to the mediums, to sitters at seances there are no recordings, to my knowledge, of such happenings. I should like to suggest an experiment to genuine sensitives which would, if negative, do the Spiritualist cause no harm and, if it were successful, do it some service. Let there be selected, perhaps through a university student union, a number of foreigners from as many countries as possible, and let them hold a series of seances with a sensitive with this ability. Although the foreigners will speak English themselves, one would expect deceased relatives, probably ignorant of English, communicating through the medium, to talk in their own tongues. If the seance proceedings were recorded and if communications in foreign languages unknown to the sensitive were made, many of the usual explanations of similar phenomena, such as ESP or Super-ESP, while not completely discounted, would at least be weakened.

There is a further field of investigation open to some psychical researcher. An interesting feature of some alleged Spiritualist communications in foreign languages, both spoken, and written by automatic writing or planchette, is that they have been written very rapidly backwards, or built up in speech in syllables from the end, thus, 'Lim - molim; te - shite - pishite.' This phenomenon seems related to certain happenings in hypnosis, where a pinch inflicted by the hypnotist on his own right ear may be felt by his subject's left ear. Perhaps some reader of Common Ground might collect and study such cognate phenomena, which should throw some light on the human mind, if not directly on xenolalia itself.

Over the past couple of years, an increasing concern has been shown for ethical standards in UFO investigation. Recently, this concern has borne more positive results. Here, Jenny Randles explains what is happening.

Ethics and Investigation

For too long, too little attention has been paid to what should be the primary concern of any paranormal researcher; fair treatment for the victim of a mysterious occurrence. The people we relate to are often in harrowing situations, have suffered psychologically, socially, and even physically. Sometimes they desperately need sympathy and understanding in the way in which their story is investigated. Even the deluded, the psychotic, and the deliberate fantasiers have basic human rights.

In the last couple of years a number of articles on the subject have appeared, and in early 1981 it was decided (from the point of view of British Ufology at least) to do something about it. The local groups in the south of England (formed into an alliance known as MAUFOG), and their counterparts in Northern Britain (associated, since 1974 in an alliance known as NUFON), met to formulate a code of practice, to which all serious UFO investigators could adhere. Meetings were held in Nottingham (March) and Swindon (June), with myself also chairing a discussion group on the topic at the London International UFO Congress in May. BUFORA and CONTACT (Britain's two major national societies) were invited to participate. Both were represented at the first meeting (BUFORA by no less than its chairman), and BUFORA have continued to take an active part in the formulation of the code. CONTACT, however, declined to be represented at the second meeting, and have indicated that they are 'unhappy' with the idea, although they have not elaborated upon this. If they do refuse to accept the code that is now agreed, it will be a sad indictment of what was regarded as a respected group.

While the basis of the code is now formulated the details have, of course, to be taken by the individual organisations to their own memberships. It is anticipated that this will be done before the next scheduled meeting (planned to be in Worcester, in October). Here there will be room for any modifications that might so arise, but essentially this meeting will be set the task of implementing the code. What we have in mind is the creation of an 'Accreditation Board', with representatives from each major organisation or network which accepts the principles of the code. They will be responsible for drawing up and publishing a list of 'accredited investigators' (all those who individually sign the code). This will be regularly updated by the board, who will also be in a position to arbitrate on any breeches of the code brought before it in the future. In this way, it is hoped we shall indicate the seriousness and the integrity of our endeavours, and perhaps gain better standing with the media and the public.

For the future, we have it in mind to develop and produce broader codes of conduct and practise (for example, investigation methodology) and possibly even to use the board as a means of designing courses for investigator training. We have also been exploring ways to take the code to the rest of the world.

Of course, this code has been designed for UFO researchers, but there seems to be much in it that could easily be relevant to any investigator of the paranormal. For this reason the code is reproduced here. Any suggestions that you may care to make (before October) about the code would be most welcome.

The code is divided into three sections, viz; Responsibility to the Witness; Responsibility to the Public; Responsibility to Ufology.

1. Responsibility to the Witness.

- 1.1. The identity of a witness to a UFO event shall remain confidential unless written consent is obtained from the witness to release such information.
- 1.2. The witness should be advised of the consequences which may arise if the information in clause 1.1. is released.
- 1.3. Insofar as is practicable, all interviews shall be by prior appointment.
- 1.4. It is desirable that all interviews shall be conducted by two investigators and, in the event of the witness being a woman, or a child under 15 years, that one of the investigators shall be female.
- 1.5. All requests by the witness or, in the case of a minor, a parent or other responsible person, for a third party to be present during an interview must be honoured.
- 1.6. If the witness categorically refuses to cooperate in any way, he or she is not to be approached further. The option for further contact should rest with the witness.
- 1.7. Under no circumstances shall any investigator, or member of an investigating group gain, or attempt to gain, admission to private property, other than by permission of the owner, tenant, or authorised agent.
- 1.8. Any damage to property caused by members of an investigating group during the course of an investigation shall be made good by that group.
- 1.9. Under no circumstances shall any specialised technique or equipment be used during the interviewing of a witness, other than by written consent of the witness, and the use of any such aid shall be restricted to interviews conducted by fully-qualified practitioners. The use of hypnosis shall only be under the guidance of a clinical psychologist.
- 1.10. The witness is entitled to be informed of the conclusions reached, if requested.
- 1.11. Due consideration should be given to the health and welfare of the witness.

2. Responsibility to the Public.

- 2.1. All investigators or members of an investigating group shall, so far as is practicable, cooperate fully with the Police and any other official body (particularly in circumstances which may affect national security).
- 2.2. If, during an investigation, a situation is encountered which is, or is liable to become, dangerous to the general public, or result in damage to property, the investigator shall without delay notify the Police or other responsible body, and take all reasonable steps to protect the public and property, but shall not be expected to protect property if to do so may result in undue risk to the investigator.
- 2.3. No information gained during an interview shall be made available to the news media, other than through normal procedures operating within the investigator's group.
- 2.4. The investigator shall not issue unsupported statements to the news media concerning specific cases.

3. Responsibility to Ufology.

- 3.1. The free flow of information shall not be restricted for personal gain, and due credit must be given to the source of all information.
 - 3.2. It is the duty of the investigator to make available all possible data, without delay, to all seriously concerned.
 - 3.3. All interviews regarding cases of high strangeness shall be electronically recorded, unless the use of a recorder is objected to by the witness, or other responsible person in the case of a minor.
 - 3.4. All reports shall indicate the persons present during interviews, and particulars of their status.
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A.S.S.A.P.

On 10 June 1981 the decision was taken to form THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF ANOMALOUS PHENOMENA, with these objects:

1. To obtain, store, process, and disseminate information concerning those areas of human experience and observed phenomena for which no generally acceptable explanation is as yet forthcoming.
2. To encourage and aid investigation and research into those phenomena, by the creation or co-ordination of investigative groups, and by the provision of consultative resources, technical facilities, etc.
3. To provide a multi-disciplinary forum for the exchange of views and information concerning these phenomena.

The need for such an association.

Serious public interest in the paranormal and the anomalous has never been greater. Bookstore displays, radio and TV programmes, magazine articles, even everyday conversation all attest this. While much of this interest is predictably superficial and sporadic, a widespread desire for intelligent discussion and informed explanation is equally evident; this is reinforced by the growing attention being given to such matters by behavioural scientists, particularly in the field of social studies; by members of the medical profession; and more and more frequently by physical scientists.

One consequence of this interest has been an acute awareness of the fact that no authoritative body exists effectively to collate and disseminate information, or to co-ordinate the means whereby that information may be obtained. Many specialist and local groups exist, some of which are doing excellent work within their prescribed fields, but all too often their activities are conducted in unawareness of what is being done elsewhere, while their own achievements are inadequately recognised.

It is an indication of the need for some such organisation as ASSAP, that the impulse towards launching it has come in large measure from these existing groups. Significantly, it is those already active in the field who are most eager to see the creation of a larger organisation within which their efforts will be more effectively deployed.

It is emphatically not the intention of ASSAP to replace existing groups, or even destroy their autonomy; rather, it is to give them encouragement and support in their activities.

Field of interest.

ASSAP's field of interest comprises those phenomena which are reasonably alleged to occur, but for which no explanation seems to be forthcoming within the scope of current scientific knowledge. By its very nature, no precise limit can be set to the field thus comprised, nor would it be desirable to do so. Subjects such as altered states of consciousness, apparitions, clairvoyance, spontaneous human combustion, dowsing, the EVP, extra-sensory perception, falls from the sky, glossolalia, hallucinations, hauntings, healing, hypnosis, incorruptibility, levitation, ley lines, magic, materialisation, metal-bending, miracles, multiple personality, OOB's, poltergeists, possession, precognition, PK, reincarnation, Spiritualism, stigmata, survival, synchronicity, telepathy, UFO's, visions, and Yetis are just a selection typical of the field of interest.

Views and attitudes.

ASSAP will hold no corporate views, and will discourage dogmatism in its members. They will, of course, be free to hold whatever views they choose, but when acting as members of ASSAP they must be prepared to treat those views as provisional only.

ASSAP will expect its members to adopt a scientific approach at all times. It is recognised that such a concept is ultimately undefinable: while in matters of research and investigation there is general agreement as to what constitutes scientific method, on wider issues there is apt to be disagreement even among scientists. The necessity for experimental replication as validation for the existence of a phenomenon, for example, is seen as fundamental by one school of thought, as unrealistic by another. ASSAP will not seek to impose any rigid interpretation of what constitutes a scientific approach, but will rather look to a general consensus; while this may from time result in efforts which fall short of scientific validity, this is considered preferable to a narrow interpretation which stifles initiative and inhibits positive research.

ASSAP has come into being to respond to a public need, and the meeting of that need is its primary concern. At all times it will be aware of a responsibility to the community; the pursuit of personal or group objectives will always be secondary to its wider social function.

In general, ASSAP will encourage a multi-disciplinary approach in the belief that even the most specialised enquiry may benefit from the experience of colleagues working in other fields. However, it will cater equally for those whose interests are confined to one specific field - dowsing, survival research, etc. - as for those whose interests span subject boundaries.

Aims and activities.

ASSAP's aims are threefold; to obtain, store, process, and disseminate information; to encourage and aid investigation and research; and to provide a forum for the exchange of views and information. To these ends, its projected activities will be; -

1. RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION.

- Create and maintain a national investigative network, capable of immediate deployment in response to demand. (This will to a large extent involve the co-ordination of existing local groups).
- Create, or affiliate with specialist groups or consultants able to provide a back-up of expertise for field investigators.
- Encourage research, and correlate research efforts on a national basis.
- Establish communications channels whereby researchers can obtain access to experts or specialist consultants.
- Make available technical facilities for chemical analysis, examination of photographs, etc.
- Establish generally acceptable codes of investigative practice, procedural methods, ethical standards.

2. INFORMATION PROCESSING.

- Create and maintain national data bases, including libraries and archives, research files and reference facilities.
- Introduce methods whereby information so stored can be made rapidly and widely available.
- Establish commonly acceptable classification systems, information coding systems, standardised nomenclature, etc.

3. COMMUNICATIONS - INTERNAL.

- Establish communications channels to facilitate the free flow of information between members. Apart from the information sources mentioned above, a regular newsletter will be published at frequent intervals, while more substantial contributions will appear in a journal of record. (No attempt will be made to compete with existing journals; rather, encouragement will be given to 'approved' specialist publications such as Fortean Times, Flying Saucer Review, and The Ley Hunter).
- Sponsor or support study sessions, training seminars and other events, and provide opportunities for members to meet for the exchange of views and information, particularly on an inter-disciplinary basis. Every effort will be made to do this on a nationwide basis, avoiding as far as is practicable the London-based bias which so often obtains.

4. COMMUNICATIONS - EXTERNAL.

- Establish positive relations with the media at both a local and a national level.
- Provide a register of acknowledged investigators and consultants throughout the country who can be approached by the media, by the Police and Local Authorities, and by members of the public, for help, information, and advice.
- Present public meetings, lectures, exhibitions, etc. to encourage serious public interest. Notably, to provide speakers for educational institutions, societies, etc. and so far as is possible to make ASSAP's resources available to them.
- Establish friendly and co-operative relations with other groups who may not choose, or be able, to affiliate with ASSAP.
- Establish links with overseas bodies with similar aims.
- Generally, to seek every means of encouraging the community at large to adopt an intelligent, informed attitude towards these matters.

Membership and affiliation.

1. GROUPS.

ASSAP does not seek to replace or compete with any existing organisation. Rather, it aims to provide a central organisation to which existing groups may affiliate themselves for their own benefit. Among the benefits are these; -

- Opportunity for participation, in research and investigative programmes, on a wider scale.
- Opportunity for communication with other groups with similar or related interests.
- Shared facilities for data-processing, technical assistance, expert consultancy, etc.
- Enhanced credibility through association with a national organisation whose standards will hopefully become generally known and respected.
- Opportunity to make its own activities more widely known through ASSAP's internal and external communications facilities.
- Opportunity to participate in national conferences and other functions.
- Support from ASSAP for the group's own ventures.

Groups which elect to affiliate to ASSAP will not be required to surrender any of their autonomy. All that is asked is that they subscribe to the general principles of ASSAP with regard to standards of ethics, objective investigation, etc. It will be for each group to decide to what extent it will integrate its activities with those of ASSAP as a whole.

2. INDIVIDUALS.

It is anticipated that most members of existing groups which affiliate with ASSAP will also wish to join as individuals. Apart from the intangible benefit of participation in an organisation composed of like-minded people, the benefits of individual membership may include; -

- * Free subscription to the ASSAP newsletter.
- * Other ASSAP publications free, or at reduced price.
- * Free or reduced-cost admission to ASSAP functions, courses, etc.
- * Admission to members-only functions and activities.
- * Free or reduced-cost access to ASSAP's resources and facilities.
- * Right to vote, stand for office, and participate in ASSAP's activities.
- * Allocation of cases for field investigation and research.

Other benefits may become available in the course of time; for example, it is possible that reduced-cost subscriptions to certain journals may be made available to ASSAP members.

PROVISIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF ASSAP.

Provisionally, it is not anticipated that ASSAP will require either permanent premises or a paid staff. Consequently, all money paid to the Association, whether as subscriptions, or donations, or by way of income from functions and publications, will go directly towards providing services for members.

In due course formal articles of association will be drawn up, to provide constitutionally for the running of the Association. These will provide, inter alia, for democratic electoral procedures. Until such time as elections can be held, a working committee, formed from among those who have set the Association in being, will provisionally administer its affairs. In due course committees will be created for special functions such as research co-ordination, investigator supervision, etc. as well as for the establishment of standards, codes of conduct, etc. An ombudsman will be elected to arbitrate on internal matters.

A provisional publications working party has been set up to initiate the journals of the Association, and it is anticipated that the first issue of the Newsletter will be published before the end of September 1981. External relations is another area of immediate concern. An officer has been appointed to administer this on a temporary basis, and plans are already being considered for ASSAP's first public event, possibly to be held in December 1981.

An annual subscription of £6 is due from all members except those under 21 or over 60, who qualify for a 50% reduction. If you wish to subscribe at this early stage, and to play some part in the formulation of the character and direction of ASSAP, subscriptions are now being accepted by the Treasurer. Please make cheques or crossed postal orders payable to ASSAP, and send to; - MAURICE TOWNSEND, 11, BENBOW CLOSE, SHOREHAM-BY-SEA, WEST SUSSEX, BN4 5RY.

Semaphore without flags

Kevin McClure

We must all be aware that there are risks inherent in UFO investigation, as there are in paranormal research in general. Many of us will have seen individuals we have known for years suddenly, without apparent reason, withdraw entirely from the subject, though it has previously played an important part in their lives. We have seen others become obsessed with evangelical religion, demanding our acceptance that entities are demons, and that Ufology is enslavement. Others still have begun to believe in the space brothers, and await intervention from other worlds in the problems of our own.

Such decisive changes of mood, attitude, and conviction are easy enough to detect; we know where we stand with those who undergo them. Less easy to recognise are gradual, often prolonged changes in a personality, or in individual beliefs and priorities, particularly where we do not know the individual concerned. With friends and acquaintances, or members of a local group, we gradually learn to take what they say with a pinch of salt, and balance their pronouncements to others with a few well-chosen words of our own. But with strangers, not known personally to us, with whom we come in contact only through their writing, it is not so simple.

Of course, there have been some instances - Brinsley le Foer Trench and Arthur Shuttlewood are two that come to mind - where we have become aware of a certain unreality of understanding in our best-known writers. We have coped by regarding them as lovable eccentrics, have stopped buying or reading their works ourselves, and have pointed out to others that we are not all quite so foolish. We have, perhaps, felt that we have done the decent thing. Probably, those who tolerated the contactee nonsense of the 50's and early 60's, which has done such lasting damage to our credibility, thought the same. But when we have such evidence of deterioration in thinking, reasoning, and understanding among those who are deeply involved in UFO research we should, maybe, consider the question a little further.

This is no time to be further fragmenting the field of UFO research by finding conspiracies where there are none. Yet the last few years have seen the emergence of a new theory in response to the vast variety and incomprehensibility of anomalous phenomena, a theory that has been proposed by a number of the very best writers in our subject, by key figures in what has been called 'the New Ufology'. This is the 'Control-System Theory', as it has become generally known, though it appears in a number of guises. It is worth some analysis.

Four major writers, in particular, have presented their versions. Let us see what they have to say

"Let's begin by supposing that somewhere in the universe there is an intelligence or force - we'll call it 'The Phenomenon' for want of a better word - that's beaming projections of various kinds into our world Whatever its nature, it has some deep sense of what human beings are thinking, and it provides us with visions that reflect the concerns of the human mind". (Clark & Rogo. 1.)

"They are the means through which man's concepts are being arranged. All we can do is to trace their effects on humans I suggest that it is human belief that is being controlled and conditioned". (Vallée. 2.)

"I believe there is a machinery of mass manipulation behind the UFO phenomenon UFO contactees are the tools of a global plan. These silent agents are walking among us unseen, placing social time-bombs at strategic spiritual locations. (Vallée. 3.).

"The Phenomenon is probably a storehouse of psychic power. A psychic person may be naturally attuned to this intelligence. Similarly, contact with it may endow the witness with psychic power The UFO phenomenon is guiding us, and we should seek to understand the message behind the communications UFO abductees deliver to us. They might be vital for our psychological and social survival. (Rogo. 4.).

"The human race has always been aware that it was serving as a pawn in some cosmic game We have been programmed well, but the Eighth Tower is dying of old age. The manifestations around us are not the work of the gods, but of a senile machine, playing out the end game. (Keel. 5.).

It is also, perhaps, worth quoting Allan Hynek.

"There are people who've had UFO experiences who've claimed to have developed psychic ability. There have been reported cases of healings in close encounters, and there have been reported cases of precognition, where people had foreknowledge or forewarning that they were going to see something. There has been a change of outlook, a change of philosophy of persons' lives. Now, you see, those are rather tricky things to talk about, but it's there.

Many people, like Jaques Vallée and I, to some extent, feel that it might be a conditioning process".

The key words and phrases, even from these short passages, become quickly apparent - 'mass manipulation', 'arranged', 'controlled and conditioned', 'provides us with visions', 'The UFO phenomenon is guiding us', 'we have been programmed well', 'it might be a conditioning process'. They are words and phrases that seem to imply consistency, deliberation, and design in the phenomena to which they refer; they seek to establish intention and planning, consistency, concern, and guidance as qualities implicit in UFO experience, in UFO reports.

In a research field where the very complexity of our classification systems has resulted from the extreme variability of the phenomena, and where the strongest argument against any kind of ETH is the very quantity and variety of craft that have been reported, it is strange to find important writers thinking in these terms. Considering that the arguments are based on material drawn from fields as diverse as folklore, psychological research, mystical experience, visions of the Virgin Mary, UFO's, OOR's, altered states of consciousness, and Fortean, the drawing of such conclusions is even more surprising.

Though the later theories of Clark, Rogo, Vallée, and Keel are very similar, and can all fairly be gathered under the 'control-system' heading, each has found his own route to the theory. John Keel has always teased, prodded, and tantalised his readers, has thrown ideas and speculations at us. It is a method that sells books, pleases readers, and has undoubtedly provoked interest and activity. But it has never been possible to see Keel as a scientist, even a fringe one. His responses to phenomena and to people have always been human, even caring, and we cannot wholly depend on his claims. 'The Eighth Tower' is almost a conspiracy theory in UFO guise, a pessimistic statement of Keel's own disillusion. It seems to have been his swan-song for serious UFO books, and I can see why, if he believes what he wrote, that was the case

"Men used to believe that earthly events, wars, and disasters were merely duplications of events taking place in an alternative universe populated by gods. But now it seems more likely that we are actually component parts of some larger system, and that we are manipulated to serve the needs of that system. We may never be able to clearly understand these needs, let alone understand the system itself It retained its control over the slaves, and is still functioning today. Instead of being a shapeless energy field in the sky, The Eighth Tower could be a specific device in a specific location on this planet. It has endured because it has the basic instinct for self-preservation, and is able to conceal itself from us by laying out false trails, by populating our forests with hairy red-eyed monsters, and our skies with luminous objects." (Keel. 5.).

D.Scott Rogo came into the Fortean/UFO field with a sound reputation in parapsychology, and with a number of excellent, serious books to his credit. It was 'The Haunted Universe' (Signet, 1977.) that marked his change of direction, covering many classical cases of UFO, psychic, and Fortean research in considerable detail. Most of his analyses relate to parapsychology, to established psychical research, but at the end of his book he remarks,

"Just as there are all sorts of uncanny things haunting our planet, there are perhaps alien intelligences invading it as well. Maybe they are mimics, mimics representing a mirror-image of our own minds. Or perhaps MIB's and phantom phone-callers represent a phenomenon so bizarre and complicated that our mortal minds could never hope to understand it." (Rogo. 6.).

He seems to have moved steadily towards ufology, despite the publication in 1979 of the rather ephemeral 'Phone Calls from the Dead' (NEL. 1979). 'UFO Abductions' was published in 1980, edited by Rogo, and covering a number of major apparent CE4 cases. In his conclusion Rogo, though he has denied intending to (letter in MUFON UFO Journal, no.157) proposes another, possibly less pessimistic version of the control-system.

"UFO abductions are physically real events. But they are dramas materialised into three-dimensional space for us by The Phenomenon. They are dreams that The Phenomenon made come to life in very frightening vividness The Phenomenon would be aware of the psychological damage resulting from a potentially traumatic self-confrontation. So it makes sure that the abduction victim initially forgets his experience at a conscious level, but makes sure that it can still be retrieved when the conscious mind is better-prepared to handle it Once someone has entered permanently into psychic contact with The Phenomenon the link may become permanent, and reactivate periodically." (Rogo. 4.).

Jerry Clark is another excellent writer and researcher, and Associate Editor of 'Fate' magazine. His best-known work is probably 'The Unidentified' (Warner, 1975), written jointly with Loren Coleman. Using a similar range of material to 'The Haunted Universe', it takes a somewhat Jungian view, and concludes with the presentation of the First and Second Laws of Paraufology;

1. The UFO mystery is primarily subjective, and its content primarily symbolic.
2. The 'objective' manifestations are psychokinetically generated byproducts of those unconscious processes which shape a culture's vision of the other-world. Existing only temporarily, they are at best only quasi-physical.

I am not sure whether Clark & Rogo's book (1) was written before or after Clark's 'position statement' in 'The Encyclopedia of UFO's', but I must record that he there states;

"I have to say that in the past two or three years I have become an agnostic about all UFO theories . . . we ought not, under any circumstances, to take our theories too seriously, and we must never give them greater primacy than we give the observed facts (however bizarre or inconvenient) of the UFO phenomenon. In my darker moments I have come to suspect that UFO's may represent something so far beyond us that our attempts to understand them may be comparable to an ant's efforts to comprehend the principles of nuclear physics."

Whichever may be the case it would seem ('UFO abductions' p.235.) that it was Clark who originated the idea of The Phenomenon, though Rogo considerably expanded it later. The early version said

"We don't have any idea where the ultimate source of these projections or this intelligence is (perhaps it is even unguessable at our present level of knowledge). It may be extra-terrestrial or interdimensional, or it may be nothing more than some automatic natural mechanism connected to our world, which possesses no particular intelligence or awareness of its own existence. It may act as routinely as, say, a clock. (Clark & Rogo. 1.).

Jaques Vallée's is, perhaps, the most interesting case of all. In terms of scope, ambition, and effect his influence has probably been greater than that of any other individual in the subject in the last fifteen years, on both sides of the Atlantic. 'The Invisible College', published in the U.K. as 'UFO's; the Psychic Solution', appeared in 1975, the same year as 'The Eighth Tower'. It is hard to imagine Vallée and Keel cooperating, but certainly both seem to have arrived at similar conclusions at much the same time. Vallée's analysis in this book is perhaps the most convincing account of the theory.

"I propose the hypothesis that there is a control system for human consciousness. I have not determined whether it is natural or spontaneous; whether it is explainable in terms of genetics, of social psychology, or of ordinary phenomena - or if it is artificial in nature, and under the power of some superhuman will. It may be entirely determined by laws that we have not yet discovered.

No matter what approach I take, I can never explain more than half of the facts 'This is what tells me that I am working on the wrong level It must be possible to gain access to the control of the UFO phenomenon but it will take a very smart approach - or a very daring one."

"The best schedule of reinforcement is one that combines periodicity with unpredictability It is interesting to ask whether the pattern of UFO waves does not have the same effect as a schedule of reinforcement."

"Human life is ruled by imagination and myth; these obey strict laws and they, too, are governed by control systems, although admittedly not of the hardware type. If UFO's are having an effect at that level it will be almost impossible to detect it by conventional methods If UFO activity operates in the same way as Skinner's reinforcement, then the learning will take time, but will never be forgotten."

"There is a strange urge in my mind; I would like to stop behaving as a rat pressing levers - even if I have to go hungry for a while." (Vallée. 2.).

I am not sure if Jaques Vallée ever did go hungry, though I somehow doubt it, but in the course of the research for his next book, 'Messengers of Deception', published in 1979, he chose some strange subjects. I regard this as the least considered of Vallée's books, and much the least convincing. A peculiar pot-pourri of contactees, mutilations, synchronicity, and conspiracy, it is essentially a seeking-out of material to support a wilder and more extreme statement of the control-system theory. Early in the book he states;

"Let me summarise my conclusions thus far. UFO's are real. They are an application of psychotronic technology; that is, they are physical devices used to affect human consciousness. They may not be from outer space; they may, in fact, be terrestrial-based manipulating devices. Their methods are those of deception; systematic manipulation of witnesses and contactees; covert use of various sects and cults; control of the channels through which the alleged 'space messages' can make an impact on the public

You will see human beings under the control of a strange force that is bending them in absurd ways, forcing them to play a role in a bizarre game of deception. This role may be very important if changing social conditions make it desirable to focus the attention of the public on the distant stars, while obsolete human institutions are wiped out and rebuilt in new ways. Is this the deeper meaning of the UFO 'deception'? Are the manipulators, in the final analysis, nothing more than a group of humans who have mastered a very advanced form of power?

Consider this; UFO contactees are the tools of a global plan. These silent agents are walking among us unseen, placing social time-bombs at strategic spiritual locations. Some fine morning, we may wake up from our 'scientific' complacency to find strangers walking through the ruins of our Establishments."

Despite the inclusion in the book of Vallée's statement about UFO's to the U.N. and a piece by sociologist, Professor David Swift, it is hard to take 'Messengers of Deception' very seriously.

Perhaps it is too easy to stand aside and criticise: my whole life and work is not involved with UFO's, nor does my living depend upon them. Yet it is clear that we have a surprising paradox, a dichotomy between the material itself, and the theory which is extrapolated from it. This seems to be true of all the works mentioned above. As I have said, the material that makes up the bulk of each of these books covers a wide span of time, location, and type of phenomena. Each, except the last, make a coherent and convincing case for what we might call 'the continuity of phenomena'. It is made plain that anomalous, yet visible and influential events have occurred in many places, for many centuries. The evidence of a high proportion of the cases is clear and strong, and the reader is usually happy to accept that the phenomena, while many and various, and widely distributed, have some overall relationship, some sort of historical continuity.

From such a presentation, one would naturally expect a theory to evolve, an argument to develop. Similar methods have been used in the past to support the case for the ETH, and also for intra-dimensional 'intrusion' theories. Yet to me, at least, the 'control-system theory' is the last that I would expect to emerge implying, as it does, the minimal involvement of the will and consciousness of the witness in the innovation, rather than the perception, of the event.

The evidence, as Jerry Clark concluded in 'The Unidentified', seems to point very much the other way; to accept that there is some recurrent quirk in human nature, perception or psychology seems more reasonable than to believe in an external consciousness, or even device, conceiving and enacting events that, by our very definition, appear to most of us as anomalous with consensus reality. Even if we were to accept the existence of such a consciousness, and a proportion of the reported events presented as evidence, what possible evidence is there to support the contention that the two are not only directly related, but that events are being planned and controlled in a manner that could constitute a system of control, education, or deception? I do not think that such evidence can be provided: it certainly has not been so far.

What, then, could cause such misapprehension, such confusion, such paranoia even, among such capable and accomplished researchers? Have they been too close to it all, for too long? Is it not possible to stay in the subject for more than a few years at the highest level, without your judgement being affected?

Perhaps one clue lies in a remark of Vallée's in 'Messengers', where he writes, "UFO's are extremely important to contemporary civilisation". If Vallée believes that statement to be true, either on a straightforward media level, or even on a subtler 'control-system' one, then he is deluded, though it is natural that we should wish to feel that what we do matters. While there may have been a flurry of interest at the time of the release of Spielberg's film, or at the time of the Kaikoura report, all we have to do to assess the true level of interest in our subject is to look at the membership of our national UFO organisations, or the circulation of the best of our journals. Even Allan Hynek's CUFOG, in the U.S.A., has had recently to shed staff, and curtail the scope of its activities for financial reasons. It would be nice to think that UFO's are important to civilisation, but civilisation generally, unless asked in an opinion poll, or offered a pulp magazine or newspaper, really couldn't care less about the subject that we, for very sound reasons, take so seriously.

What is important to contemporary civilisation - what is important to any civilisation, and has been for millennia - is that mysteries should be resolved, or at least made not to be awkward and uncomfortable. Anomalous and paranormal experience has generally, whether the event be healing, enlightenment, vision, motion, or message, been moulded into one element or another of a belief system, more often than not in to a form of religion. In most cases it is characterised as good or evil, and its cause, source, or inspiration is then assigned to some archetypal divine or demonic power. Seldom will you find a belief system that accords to the will or consciousness of the individual the power to cause or effect such events, save through prayer or in mystical experience. It seems that we do seek to offload responsibility, to involve an external influence in our decisions, intentions, mistakes, and achievements; it seems that we cannot cope with it all by ourselves.

Perhaps I may seem to be becoming a little Jungian myself, to be leading up to a 'modern myth' type of explanation. But I would not like to propose any thing quite so over-simplified, or so definite.

All I would suggest at this stage is that the 'control-system theory', like so many before it appears to be an attempt, possibly an unconscious one, to rationalise a vast array of anomalous and irrational phenomena, to make them easier to handle, if no more easy to understand. There are, you will notice, no explanations as to 'how' and 'why' in the control-system theory, only dark hints as to 'where from'. It is a theory without proof, and without much conviction.

It is difficult to accept mysteries, to keep on logging, investigating, and writing-up. There is no guarantee that we will ever be able to draw firm conclusions, or have the satisfaction of finding answers to these mysteries. But the clear alternative, from abundant past and present experience, is to theorise to meet our own psychological and emotional needs, without sound reason, and that is both pointless and wasteful. We will never achieve anything by that route, and really, we can only hang on, patiently, preserving our objectivity and remembering our responsibilities, hoping that something will eventually come clear.

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MAURICE BARBANELL

Maurice Barbanell, editor of 'Psychic News', and 'Two Worlds', medium to Silver Birch, perhaps the best-known spirit guide in the world, and founder of the Survival Joint Research Committee Trust, died, age 79, on the 17th. of July. Since before the Second World War he has been Spirituality's most persistent and effective advocate, and there is little doubt that 'Psychic News', which seemed at times to be little more than a vehicle for his beliefs and opinions, will miss him very severely.

Barbanell was, actually, the first editor to print any of my work, back in 1970, though I have received some tart and abrasive letters from him since then as, I'm sure, have many others! He was not a man to submit quietly to criticism - even the copy of CG1 that I sent, after FN had helped with some information was treated, in print, to a crusty response.

The issue of FN following that in which Maurice Barbanell's 'promotion' was announced carries the headline, 'Maurice Barbanell makes a speedy seance return', though little evidence is offered in support. However, those of us who hope survival is a fact will also wish that his may be the very proof to support that hope. Even if it is not, his own work and energy over many years in to a remarkably active old age, will surely survive, in many ways, for a very long time.

The Ark on Ararat.

The search, apparently quite fruitless to date, for the miraculously preserved remains of Noah's Ark, is an established and delightful part of the canon of anomalous facts in which most of us find so much pleasure. I recently had the good fortune to come across a paperback book, entitled, 'The Ark on Ararat', by Tim Lahaye and John Morris (Lakeland; Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1979) which, though written from what is a very clear and very strong evangelical/fundamentalist basis, includes some fascinating material. I can only quote briefly here but, for anyone who has ever felt discouraged by the length, the complexity, or the sheer impossibility of an investigation, I would like to recount the adventures of John Libi, a man who makes Robert the Bruce look like a quitter

"Consider the case of John Libi from San Francisco. Extremely capable, an experienced mountain climber, fluent in Turkish and several other languages, knowledgeable leader and dedicated adventurer, Libi tried eight times in fifteen years to find the Ark. Although he nearly lost his life several times on the mountain, and faced countless other dangers, he combed the mountain more thoroughly than many succeeding groups but never achieved his objective.

1954 - Thinking the Ark was near the summit of the mountain, Libi engineered two ascents. On one of the ascents, Libi was attacked and chased by two huge bears up near the ice cap. The additional exertion required to outrun them, coupled with rarefied air and the cold, caused Libi to develop a serious illness and fever, from which it took a month to recuperate. On the second climb, late in the summer, the weather turned bad even though it had been quite favourable, and further explorations were impractical.

1955 - Libi returned with his team of explorers, but due to unexpected political turmoil, permission to climb the mountain was rescinded.

1958 - This time leading a group of forty men, Libi, sixty-two years old, fell thirty feet to a rock ledge, and had to be carried off the mountain and hospitalised in a nearby town.

1960 - The weather on Ararat won another battle, for again Libi required hospitalisation, this time in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, for Pneumonia.

1962 - On May 9th, while boarding a train in Italy en route to Ararat, Libi was robbed of all the expedition's finances.

1965 - A horrible July thunderstorm and blizzard separated the team of ten into three groups. One group finally returned to camp suffering from advanced stages of fatigue and exposure after wandering on the mountain slopes in search of safety for three days. The storm washed away the entire food supply, and the dejected group returned to the States.

1967 - In Libi's estimation, the worst weather he had ever seen on Mount Ararat virtually attacked them. Great quantities of snow and extreme cold forced them off the mountain. The weather claimed the life of a Belgian climber who had joined Libi's party on the mountain. The freshly fallen snow and a recent earthquake had loosened the footing, and the youth slipped over the edge of a huge cliff to his death.

1969 - Libi, defying his seventy-three years, and in spite of the fact that in 1967 he swore that he would not return, reached the summit and the spot where he believed the Ark to be. He found a layer of water-borne fossils, but no Ark."

Though Libi's two companions on this trip tore off three pieces of material from the bottom of a crevasse, they turned out to be fragmented lava, and it would seem that Libi never returned to Ararat.

ABSTRACTS

All of the journals, magazines etc. abstracted below are listed, with full address details in this issue, or in CG1. We don't intend to run another full listing (which is likely to run to some 5-6 pages) until CG5, but if you require details for any publication, we'll be happy to supply them on receipt of an s.a.e. Hope you find the abstracts useful.

BUFORA Journal. Vol.10. No.2. The final journal edited by Norman Oliver, who with its publication resigned as editor. Indeed, the final BUFORA Journal, for some time at least, in its present format, though its companion magazine, the Journal of Transient Aerial Phenomena, will continue, in a more ambitious form. This issue has a lively letters column debate on Bernard Delair's 'Cosmos 1068 or UFO' data referant to the mass sightings of 31.12.78. John Rimmer and Stuart Campbell are adamant all the data refers to the satellite re-entry. Bob Morrell and Jenny Randles prefer to keep their options open and recommend a fuller study.

Christian Parapsychologist. Vol.4. No.2. June 1981. A quietly remarkable account of a cleric's communications with an apparent entity, using a Thracian dialect from the 1st. Century A.D. and appearing to be 'in some sense' St. Stephen, the Christian Martyr. A very intriguing report.

Flying Saucer Review. Vol.26. No.6. Perhaps the best FSR for years, with a healthy trend towards international reports, particularly from Communist countries. It contains cases from Poland (UFO chases ambulance), Russia (the first CE4 report to be reported in the West, involving a Red Army officer, and showing great similarities with our own data), Scotland (a marvellous Stuart Campbell expose of the classic 'Loch Ness' landing and CE3, which is shown to have been a hoax), Australia, Spain, and Britain. Also a report from Jenny Randles on some research and statistics from 'repeater witnesses'. Vol.27. No.1. A very detailed review of the modern UFO scene in Russia, from within, describing some of the difficulties suffered at the hands of the Communist Party. Also case histories from the U.S.A. (a family encounter with entities and landed UFO's invading their property), Puerto Rico (alien chicken poachers on a farm), and the first part of a detailed reappraisal of the classic Steve Michalak case from Canada, involving radioactivity, and burns in a chequer pattern on the witness's chest.

Lincolnshire Dragon. No.4. Jenny Randles on the application of modern psychology to UFO reports and their overlap with psychic phenomena. Nigel Watson joins in the debate in the letters column. Notes on moated sites in Lincolnshire. Andrew Pickering on the politics of Paganism.

Lincs. Dragon cont. No.5. Paul Screeton reviews legends of sightings of dragons and their relation to ancient sites in Britain. Nick Akrill reviews the most prominent Ley formations in Lincs. Ted Armstrong describes the archaeology of the church of the Knight's Templars at Temple Bruer, near Lincoln.

The Ley Hunter. No.90. A welcome return after a too-long absence. A wide and fascinating range of material including John Michell with new information on Stonehenge, the Bords discussing the Powys Beast, as featured widely by the media in September and October 1980, Bob Forrest on Pyramid rubbish, an Irish alignment, information on Rollright and the ongoing Dragon Project, and all the usual excellent features by Paul Screeton, John Glover, et alia.

Magic Saucer. No.15. A 'true' ghost story, the 'Magic Saucer Theme Song' (full manuscript), and material about Quella, an extra-terrestrial who is said to communicate through a trance medium. Worth watching, MS, as it is becoming very much enmeshed in ET contacts and communication.

Magonia. No.6. Dr.Willy Smith with a major reassessment of Dr. Alvin Lawson's research into regression hypnosis, where he created imaginary UFO abductions in regressed subjects. Dr.Smith finds that his experimental details were suspect and should not have been accorded the importance they have been. He also claims that Lawson has not shown UFO abductions are subjective, only that regression memories might emerge from the subconscious. But the strong differences in real abduction memories point towards a real UFO stimulus. John Fletcher with good historical research of Prince Madoc and his travels (to the Americas before Columbus?), and Jenny Randles on a hoax pseudo-MIB.

MAPIT Skywatch. No. 39. A sheep and goats evaluation of specific UFO experiences, with some clear and useful yardsticks for such evaluation. By the ubiquitous Hilary Evans. Also Robert Morrell seeking an identity for UFOlogy in these confused times.

Meeting the Third Millennium. No.2. 'The Earthquake Generation', by Dan Lloyd reviewing in detail Jeffrey Goodman's book of that name, and relating its contents to hopes and fears for the Millennium.

MUFON UFO Journal. April 1981. An analysis by Mark Moravec of 56 CE reports as to physiological reactions of witnesses, particularly trouble in sleeping, and with sensitivity of eyes. Also, an analysis of the difficulties in trying to assess such reports.

Northern Earth Mysteries. July 1981. A retrospective of the Ley Hunter's Club, a copy of the 'Sunday Times' 'Mother Earth's Flying Saucers' article (well worth having), and a copy of Tony Wedd's sought-after 'Skyways and Landmarks' pamphlet. And an Alfred Watkins photo-offer.

Northern Ufology. No.83. The theme of this issue is 'Window areas'. Geoff Grundill argues that they are mini-black holes which create localised time-warps; Kevin McClure warns of publicity fanning the flames; Ken Phillips describes the Luton/Dunstable UFOcal and links it with local geography and leys; Granville Oldroyd and Ian Cresswell suggest they are 'consciousness-generated,' witness-centred focii, and Jenny Randles takes a sceptical view suggesting a sociological explanation for the window zones.

Northern UFO News. No. 84. Dr. R.W. Morrell responds to Ufology's 'over-involvement' in pseudo-science, such as psychic phenomena. He feels that the trend must be reversed back to science. Meanwhile a report from Lancaster concerns a 'psychic' who claims spirit-plane contact with an alien being, wanting him to be an intermediary. He refused!

No. 85. Jenny Randles describes a massive publicity campaign associated with her book 'UFO Study', and its successes and failures. The launching of a new Scottish Network is described, plus a preliminary report on a new CE4 from Todmorden, West Yorkshire, involving a police officer who claims telepathic contact with a near-landed UFO.

The Probe Report. Probably the best UFO magazine in the U.K. apart from FSR, 20 large glossy pages with photos and excellent artwork. Two photographic cases analysed in great depth (one explained as a reflection, but one from Warminster not explained), a report on a case witnessed by Jenny Randles and Paul Whetnall from the M4, and skywatch happenings at Warminster.

Psychic News. 27.6.81. A campaign launched by Gordon Higginson to improve standards in Spiritualism, with particular regard to the training, development and presentation of platform mediums and clairvoyants. Interesting that a religious grouping can attempt to train people to have what would be seen by many researchers as spontaneous events.

S.P.R. Journal. June 1981. A sound and clear account of 'Possible precognition of the Teton Dam Disaster in Idaho', by Lucille Wood-Trost. Comprehensive reviews, plus two complex, highly-technical pieces, which presumably confer scientific validity upon the Journal. But really, how many members, let alone the rest of the world, could possibly understand them?

The Skeptical Inquirer. Spring 1981. 'Hypnosis and UFO abductions', by Philip Klass, who seems more effective in this context than when debunking UFO's themselves; perhaps because there are faults in the work of Lawson and Sprinkle, on whom Klass concentrates. Also, analysis of PK experiments, and of 'Ancient America' claims. Fairly cutting reviews of Story and Berlitz.

UFO Insight. April 1981. The best critique I have yet seen of Frank Johnson's 'The Janos People', written with care and cold steel by Stuart Campbell, who manages, I suspect without too much trouble, to find a large number of technical faults and unresolved anomalies in the book, such as render it practically absurd, without even having to resort to extensive criticism of the clandestine, solitary, and overwrought nature of the investigation itself. If only the author had consulted with other investigators how differently this story might have come out. Also, a lengthy discussion of the investigation process by Mark Tyrrell and, more disturbingly, a long sometimes valid review of the Llanerchymedd case, which gradually descends to being a personal, and rather vicious, attack on a number of UFOIN investigators. One hopes they will all be offered the right of reply, at similar length, in the pages of this usually excellent journal.

UFO Research Review. No.3. Vol.6. An unusually unedifying issue, seemingly compiled under the influence of Professor John Taylor, parapsychology's answer to the Vicar of Bray. A very long review of Jenny Randles's 'UFO Study' is used to convey a number of other points and opinions, and an article, which is little more than an unfounded personal attack on a few individuals, entitled 'Investigation not Speculation'; it comes from the hand of Les Hall. The REVIEW has a deservedly large circulation, and serves a particularly valuable role in communicating with other disciplines. Surely it can find less subjective and more worthy material?

The Angel Hair Problem in UFO Research. An example of how good Robert Morrell's work can be (see above!) this is a complete version of a paper he presented to the NUFON Conference at Manchester in June 1981. This is his preliminary work into a number of little-known angel-hair cases. After scientific experimentation with spiders' webs he concludes that most of the cases are probably explicable in this way. He discusses the most likely form of spider and how the web is proliferated. This pamphlet is available at 5p. plus postage from Dr. R.W. Morrell, 443, Meadow Lane, Nottingham, NG2 3GB.

It seems apparent that, though many of us may feel that the strict application of scientific method and evaluation is not wholly appropriate to paranormal research and investigation, there is much to be gained from the adaptation of conventional methods of information storage, organisation, analysis, preservation, and retrieval to our own areas of interest. This seems to apply particularly to the study of anomalous information, where historical occurrence and precedent is liable to have a marked effect on our own interpretation of data; so many valuable items, reports, and investigation results have undoubtedly been lost over the years that their loss is bound to have affected our own efforts at drawing tentative conclusions. Had this material been preserved, in a clear and accessible format, not only our own endeavours, but the very status of our subject, might have been considerably enhanced.

We present below three considered and ambitious propositions for the storage, organisation, and retrieval of various forms of information, which we all, particularly the writers, hope will form the basis both for discussion of the various projects, and for the input of material to them.

A Microcomputer - UFO Database

Paul Wilson

Today, when technology is advancing faster than most of us can keep up with, and Clive Sinclair will sell you a perfectly respectable computer for £50, it is perhaps time to consider the possibilities of relating computers to UFO research. This article will be a necessarily brief outline of a computer system I am designing to store and retrieve UFO reports.

Perhaps it would be well to cover the least digestible part of the topic first. To those with less of a technical bent I apologise, for the remainder I am using a Nascom 1 with 32k RAM, EPROM programmer and resident assembler. The next month or so should see some kind of bulk storage device become available.

The initial aim of the system (which I have begun to call UDS for UFO Database System) was to provide a database of well-researched UFO reports for processing by statistical routines. After all, sampling and other more refined statistical studies are not just impressive, they can stimulate discussion and further research if presented correctly. However, such a database can be useful in its own right as a library type index to the included reports.

Even a cursory examination of one or two well investigated reports immediately shows the necessity of somehow reducing the quantity of information available. The obvious approach is to design a coding scheme which will allow the pertinent quanta of data to be isolated in a report and then fed into the computer. At this early stage, this will be a manual system which can be carried out away from the computer, the coded data being collected and typed into the database when convenient. A suitable coding system has been under development for some time with the help of UFOIN investigators and is now (hopefully) in a satisfactory state.

In computer terms, the programs required fall into five categories: (1) to enter data, (2) to retrieve data, (3) to manipulate data, (4) to print or display the results, (5) to interact with the user. So far, categories (1) and (5) are complete, (2) is being written together with a part of (4) and (3) has a number of rudimentary designs done. What this means in practice is that UDS can communicate with the user and accept data. The programs to retrieve and display the data are being written (although those portions which read and write the database files will change with the hardware), and the statistical routines are still on the drawing board.

There are three obvious problems associated with any project like UDS. The first concerns the reliability of the data put into the system. The best that can be done is to accept the existence of various standards of investigation, and try to take (as far as possible) reports from reliable sources, perhaps footnoting those of doubtful reliability. The second relates to the sheer quantity of data - so I have initially limited myself to post-1960 British reports for purely practical reasons. Finally, how are people going to use UDS? That knotty problem I'm discussing currently, but will probably involve all requests being forwarded via half-a-dozen UFOIN members who will 'vet' them for practicability.

If anyone reading this has suggestions, comments or criticisms, I'll be glad to hear from them.
(Please write to Paul Wilson, 6, Parkinsons Yard, Richmond, N.Yorks. DL10 4JB).

The MAPIT Resources Centre

David Rees

The need for information is as basic a requirement for mankind as any other. Information as a resource, however, is increasing at as fast a rate as 'natural resources' are decreasing, perhaps even faster.

Since our joint 'Statement of Intent' was published in 1979, MAPIT and FUFOR have discussed the possibility of setting-up a 'resources centre'. Both organisations fully recognise the problems this involves, and this was not a hastily taken decision by over-enthusiastic individuals likely to lose their interest in the project after a couple of months. We intend to start the Centre, and wish to appeal to you all to assist us.

There are many good reasons for starting such a Centre. For instance:- (1) it will offer a comprehensive collection of reference material in one central location, which will include subjects other than 'ufology'; (2) the information stored at the Centre will be available to all interested parties and (3) over the long-term it will establish a much-needed, long overdue, archival collection of items, which will be a historic record for all future generations to make use of.

The Centre will be a facility for everyone to have access to, be they involved in serious research, the media, free-lance writers or just ordinary individuals who require an answer to a particular query. The methods of obtaining the material will be via the telephone, writing to the Centre and, in some cases, photocopying the material required and sending it to the enquirers. Finally, of course, information can be obtained from personal visits. There are many things to be organised; the formation of a regular team of translators is something that can be planned for in the long-term, as can the purchase of a quality photo-copier that can be housed at the Centre. The Centre will, of course, have to charge for supplying any information in order to cover costs for its upkeep.

Any collection of material must be fully referenced and catalogued for easy reference. To assist the Centre we have ordered a 'Sinclair ZX-81' computer, which will allow us to use the latest technology for setting-up three main indexes. These are; a general index; subject index; and abstract index. The potential for forming new indexes will be greatly enlarged with the help of the 'ZX-81'; as John Prytz has said, 'any information that can be stored on a piece of paper can be stored in a computer. For example;- bibliographies, names of authors, titles of books, articles from journals with specific date and edition, cross-references, indexes that you own, plus the databases of other ufologists - including their names, addresses, and telephone numbers, etc.

We would like as many sources as possible to support us; this can be done in various ways. It is, for instance, financially impossible for us to subscribe to every magazine, journal, and newsletter published, and we would like to hear from Editors who are willing to donate copies (both back and future) of their publications for inclusion in the Centre. Any donations will be greatly appreciated, e.g. newsclippings, old magazines, tapes, photos, case histories, etc.

To aid the purchase of collections and individual items, a support fund has been formed, and persons wishing to send any donations to it are asked to forward them to the MAPIT address; -

MAPIT, David Rees, 92, Hillcrest Road, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 5SE.

The Fortean Computer Project

Bob Rickard

In effect, the 'Fortean Computer Project' centres on the data accumulated in books, magazines, illustrations and newsclippings owned by 'Fortean Times' editor Bob Rickard, through his personal pursuits and through FT. These are supplemented by the libraries of a few Fortean closely associated with the production of FT (our various newsclipping collections having been amalgamated). Further material comes from donated or otherwise acquired collections. Daily, more newsclippings on current Fortean events arrive from all quarters of the world - far more, in the periods between issues of FT, than we could ever hope to cram into any single issue.

This is our primary database. It is impossible to give a number to the items of information because they are not marshalled in any coherent way. We are looking towards computerizing mainly to make information handling more efficient. Some have feared that we plan to pump everything into a computer-memory and rely on that, running risks of erroneous entries, damage, and even loss of important data, but this valid caution applies mainly to what we consider a secondary function - information storage. Our prime target is a super-index, if you like - but an index which has powerful facilities for extraction, compilation, and correlation of any specific topic.

We could have acquired a computer some time ago, but instead decided to work out precisely what it is we want to do, and how to do it. This wait has a great advantage in that as time goes by the price of computers has come down bringing more powerful and flexible systems within financial range, plus the bonus of technological improvements.

First, I should say a word about our terms of reference. In our view 'Fortean' applies to no particular subject - it is not what is left when you divide off the fields of psychical research, ufology, and so-called 'Earth mysteries'. Forteanism is an approach or attitude, best characterised by Fort's description of himself as being, 'not so much interested in things as in the relations of things'. The modern Fortean's interest is across the board strange phenomena, including phenomena not yet scientifically accepted. Fortean research takes several forms. The most basic is the collection of data. Second comes checking all events and descriptions back to primary witnesses and statements. Thirdly, there is the correlation of particular kinds of phenomena or morphologies. Fourthly, we need the compilation of chronological and bibliographical lists. There are other, more specialised needs, but these are the most universal needs.

For several years now I have been refining the basic system. There were two alternatives; the steady accumulation of data under predefined topics (e.g. all cases of material falling from the sky, or sea-serpent sightings, or spontaneous human combustions) - or the accumulation of an unstructured database which could be interrogated on a specific point or topic from which a citation or list could be made. Some researchers have begun their own efforts at database compilation by accumulating data specifically on the topic which interests them most (the first method), since this is the easiest and simplest method. However, once such a database reaches a certain size it becomes unwieldy, and the ability to make cross-references (the key Fortean research need) is severely limited. Accordingly, we have opted to compile a general unstructured database. Such a system needs slightly more sophisticated equipment than that available in the cheapest cost bracket. A basic computer, with intelligent terminal, 48K of memory for carrying out the tasks, and twin floppy-disc memory drives, begins around £1,500 - £2,000. A printer would be extra, according to the quality of type needed. Most systems in this bracket can be expanded to match growing needs; more memory-storage on a more efficient hard disc, or a allowing several terminals to access the same database, and more elaborate data manipulation processes.

Most industrial (etc.) uses of computers require them to operate at high speeds - we can afford to be more leisurely, and this in turn gives us a choice of cheaper hardware, but the computer-operating languages tend to be slower. This is normally a consideration but we have the time, especially since we are only talking about differences of fractions of seconds to quarters of hours. Operating programmes are extra to the cost above. If your needs are simple you could probably make do with 'off-the-peg' software. For our needs we have to be able to design our own files, specify a few functions and operations, and the whole system needs a set of instructions called a 'database manager'. (Most manufacturers offer their own, but software firms offer some as well).

Because of the speed at which today's systems operate in searching a database, there is little need in the primary database for material to be accumulated chronologically or according to any other informational structure. Our accumulation of material follows no pattern, and if we had to wait, for example, until we had all the known SHC cases to date to enter them into the database chronologically, it would be a long wait indeed. In our database a sea-serpent report from 1834 may be next to a fall of frogs from 1979, followed by a UFO sighting from 1954, etc. etc. The database would consist of 5-6 files dealing with different types of extracted information: a directory of subjects and code numbers, the 'hot' file with date, location, and type of event summary, details of witnesses, etc, event description, and bibliographic citations.

Every word in these entries will be cross-referencable against the remainder of the database. After extracting details of a case we simply add it on to the end of the database. Subject codings indicate 'families' of topics (e.g. a fall of material may be common to UFO, poltergeist, conventional meteorological or unlisted phenomena, and may have the same coding regardless of 'type' of case). However, in the entry for that event would be included a list of other subject- or event-codes which cross-reference with it. Each event has a unique code number generated naturally out of its date and type.

This complicated-sounding structure will (we hope) be simple to operate. If you want to compile a list of falling material, the database would be searched and the records listed however you specify (e.g. chronologically, or by location, or by type of material or animal that fell, etc.). Similar lists or catalogues could be compiled (say annually) for researchers to save time searching the entire database for, say, 'Any fall in 1953 associated with a UFO, report in Sweden?' Not in the lists, but instantly called to screen or printer would be all the known bibliographical citations of that case, and whether they have been checked for verisimilitude. On the other hand, knowing I will be spending a day at the Newspaper Library, at Colindale, I could call for a listing of all unchecked cases cited from the Bombay Bugle or from a particular issue of New Scientist.

Most of my own research is bibliographic, and since I am the person who will be doing all the initial hard work, data accumulation will be in priority areas connected to my research for 'Fortean Times' and any commissioned writing. Naturally, this is the tip of a huge iceberg, and one in need of debate. How will such a database be run? Will it be accessible to others? Who will run it? etc.

It all boils down to money. It is the person who lays out for a system and then commits huge amounts of time developing the database and priming it with material up to a functional level; it all depends on him. A database represents an outlay of great sums of money (for hardware and software), and time (the software has to be worked-up, the data has to be fed in, etc.). There is no possibility of funding (as yet) other than the personal investment of time and money by whoever starts such a scheme. I have been planning such a task for several years, and will continue to peg away at it slowly. I will take my time and try to make correct decisions because mistakes will be costly in time and money. I will have to do this whilst earning a living, and since I do this mainly by writing, the first priority of my database is to make my own research more efficient.

Once functional, where do I go from there? Ideally, it would be very nice indeed if anyone could write or phone an enquiry, and back would come a print-out of some sort. But this would be hard to implement. What happens when the number of enquiries swells so as to prevent me from earning a living, or getting on with my own research? I don't think anyone can reasonably expect access to such a database under such conditions to be free. Perhaps relationships with other database users or builders could be arranged for information. Perhaps different computers could talk to each other by exchanging floppy-disks? Researchers wanting long or detailed access may have to pay for it - not exorbitantly, but enough at least to cover running-expenses, or allow the system to pay for itself. Then there is the problem of commercial access. In this field I think commercial publishers or users should pay substantially, if this could subsidise the usually impoverished researcher.

Currently, I am debating the idea of a Fortean Institute, which would be constructed around the FT database, and access 'credits' may be earned by feeding the database with information it hasn't already got.

The problem of access to a database is a thorny one. I have decided, for the sake of being able to make some faltering progress at least, to consider the FT database as my personal project, being involved in every aspect. Its realisation will be slow, and geared to FT and my writing projects. Once this is established it could be extended into practical interactive schemes, along avenues to be carefully defined in the future. We have to start somewhere in an achievable range. If a multitude of private systems spring up, so much the better. The problems of getting different computers to talk to each other are technologically soluble. More difficult are the definitions, categories, and quality of data used by different researchers, which will be 80% incompatible. But develop them we must - and let them compete. The best systems will survive, evolve, talk to each other, and grow.

SAI BABA

An interesting situation is developing with regard to the increasing amount of publicity being given to one Shri Sathya Sai Baba, a western-oriented spiritual leader from Southern India in the tradition of the Maharishi, Guru Maharaj Ji, and Shri Rajneesh. Numerous articles have appeared in the two Spiritualist publications, 'Psychic News' and 'Two Worlds', and in March this year 'Magic Saucer', a youth-oriented UFO magazine sent unsolicited to some children featured in UFO reports in the media included a strongly propagandist article about him. This featured statements such as, 'Sai Baba has performed various miracles such as healing medically incurable diseases (and) bringing the dead back to life', 'He doesn't even sleep', 'Because of Baba's limitless power He is aware of all our thoughts and prayers', and, 'Sai Baba, among many other gifts, has also been known to materialise gifts for people from other planets'.

It does not seem to be Baba's philosophy that creates such an interest, but rather the supposed miracles he performs, and the psi-type powers he is said to have repeatedly demonstrated. Detailed, apparently verified, reports tell of bi-location, materialisation (particularly of gifts such as necklaces, statues, and vibhuti, sacred ash), exorcism, the bringing back to life of one Walter Cowan, creating from twigs a silver statue of Christ, and causing a rainbow. Extensive healing has been reported.

'Psychic News' has gone so far as to support the claim, made by Baba's followers, that he is the Second Coming of Christ. On the other hand Tal Brooke, an evangelical author and former disciple, has made detailed accusations of the sexual exploitation of young male followers; the subject is clearly already a controversial one. I do not think it is within our brief to concern ourselves with emotional and religious attitudes, but we should look at the facts of the reported anomalous, paranormal, and miraculous events, if facts they be. We would be pleased to receive any objective, verified reports of such events, presented in a manner that will enlighten, rather than obscure the truth in what already seems to be a confused situation.

CLOSING REMARKS.

If we are to work on the assumption that the broad field of paranormal research may be seen as a continuous whole - and that, after all, is what 'Common Ground' is meant to be about - then we are living through strange, if interesting times, in which the component parts of the field seem to be facing similar problems, and in which some intriguing ideas are emerging as a consequence. Times of fragmentation, but of new beginnings; of frequent personal vilification, but also of co-operation between groups and individuals whom we would hardly have expected to work together.

The clearest example of fragmentation and reconstruction must be in the after-effects of the S.P.R. dispute, and the more or less consequent formation of the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena. The majority of the founding fathers of ASSAP have till recently been active in the S.P.R., in several cases on the S.P.R. Council, and it will be all too easy for the two organisations to be seen as direct rivals, and for aggression and unpleasantness to ensue and persist. But this seems to be wholly unnecessary in the light of the marked differences in approach to areas of interest, principles of membership, and aims and methods of research and investigation between the two. We hope that the few individuals whose efforts will be vital in avoiding conflict, and in establishing civil and constructive relations between the two organisations will be aware of their responsibilities. It is intended that 'Common Ground', without losing its editorial independence, or in any way limiting its wide range of contributors, will additionally function as a journal of record for ASSAP, and that both will benefit from the relationship; more of this in CG3. But whatever happens, we will do our best to maintain close links between the energy of ASSAP, and the experience of the S.P.R., and will look forward to receiving contributions from the members of both organisations.

Ufology also has serious problems, some caused by the limitations of dwindling finances and memberships, others by disputes over methodology, approach, and organisation, and the interpretation of results, that have developed an all too personal flavour. Much as the S.P.R. Journal has been limited to three, rather than four issues a year, the BUFORA Journal has, sadly, been forced to cease publication entirely. Even Flying Saucer Review, as I understand, is in a much more difficult position than two years ago; it seems that the recession has no favourites.

The split between those for and against the members and methods of the UFO Investigators' Network, UFOIN, run by Jenny Randles, is made particularly obvious in the issues of UFO Insight and UFO Research Review abstracted elsewhere in this issue. The impression is given that some investigators have become preoccupied with the investigation process as an end in itself, rather than the object of the investigation which is, surely, the study of un-identified flying objects! Perhaps there are some close parallels here with some of the divisions within the S.P.R. - maybe logic isn't quite enough - possibly we must have the occasional leap in the dark. Abuse, aggression, and personal attacks are a regular part of Ufology, as they are a part of psychical research and, all too often, of Spiritualism and stage psychism too; think of the dispute over the Elizaldes, over Geller and the other metal-benders, over the charges of fraud in the Bristol Church levelled against Gordon Higginson, and over many other similar issues too. Is it because we are so protective of our beliefs and discoveries, and of our fear of being thought eccentric, that we fight so bitterly among ourselves? It is, perhaps, inevitable; it may even serve some useful purpose; but if so, then it should be better controlled, and should not demean our public image, or take up so much time and energy.

Yet despite all this, there is much that is encouraging. There is a rumour of co-operation between BUFORA and the Flying Saucer Review; there is a good likelihood of practical reorganisation to link the investigation networks of BUFORA and UFOIN in some way. Leslie Bayer and Maureen Hall of BUFORA, and Jenny Randles of UFOIN are to be congratulated on their efforts in this respect. ASSAP must serve to improve the status and quality of paranormal research in this country, if only by linking the experience and knowledge of a wide variety of local groups. All these organisations are showing unprecedented concern for ethics and training in investigation; it genuinely seems that the subject is reaching a real maturity at last. 'Common Ground' will, we hope, be able to chronicle this era of concern and co-operation, and to communicate between its practitioners, by publishing the experience and the ideas of those involved. 'Psychic News', which has by far the largest readership and circulation of any publication featuring paranormal and anomalous experience, has already pledged itself, under Tony Ortzen, to broaden its scope, feature in-depth articles from related subjects by experienced writers; and anyone who has followed FN over the years will agree, I suspect, that such a change has, at this time, to be something of an omen. Here's to the friends of genuine, open-minded research, and confusion to our enemies!

Kevin McClure.

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